

MFSI News

Tasahce-rakko Big Spring April 2007

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative

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Inside this issue:

Garden Tips	2
Indigenous Food	3
From the Garden	4
From the Garden con't	5
Pumpkin Cooking Class	5
Calendar	6

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A majority of the Board, Advisory Committee, Ex Officio and staff are Muscogee (Creek) citizens.

Community Food Assessments are Underway

MFSI has begun the process of holding meetings to survey the food-related issues, concerns, needs and resources present in MCN communities. Participation has been good at the Wilson, Cromwell, Sapulpa and Muskogee Creek Indian communities, to date.

Here are some of the more notable results thus far:

- Over 97% of respondents stated they would buy produce from a Farmer's Market, if one existed in their local community;
- Over 93% of the respondents stated they would prefer to eat locally grown foods;
- Over 93% stated they are concerned about chemicals (herbicides, pesticides and fungicides) in food;
- Over 93% stated they are concerned about food contamination (e-coli, salmonella, etc).
- Over 70% stated they would participate in a food coop, though most citizens in northeastern Oklahoma have little experience with a food coop;

- Only 44% of the respondents actually have a family garden; , but 72% said they would garden if a tilling service was provided.;
- Almost 80% of the respondents stated they would help in a community garden if one was started in their community.

MFSI staff continue to schedule the remaining tribal community boards on the type of assessment they wish to undertake. The dialog, thus far, has been interesting with Mvskoke citizens and their neighbors, To hear local concerns and interests related to food, and to hear the knowledge that still exists pertaining to growing food and preserving it, has been inspiring.

April Gardening Tips

The time to **Think** about gardening has past, and now the growing season is upon us. Hopefully, your seeds, bulbs and starts are in hand. Perhaps you have been to one of the MFSI Community Assessment Survey meetings and picked up a good quantity of seeds, courtesy of a donation from Heifer International. Or, maybe you saved the seeds from a tan field pumpkin you purchased from us last fall.

At any rate, what are some things that we should be doing? Most Mvskoke people (living within the boundaries of MCN) fall in Plant Zones 6b or 7a. Lots of gardeners in these parts associate the planting of warm season vegetables with the tax deadlines. But, Oklahoma weather being what it is, we all know that late frosts can take their toll on a wide variety of tender plants. Here are some excerpts from the OSU Extension Services planting guide for warm season vegetables:

Vegetable	Planting Time	Seed Planting Depth	Spacing between seeds	Spacing Between rows	Days to Harvest
Bean (lima)	Apr. 15-30	1"	6"	2-3'	90-120
Bean (green or wax)	Apr. 10-30	1"	4"	1.5'	50-60
Bean (pole)	Apr. 10-30	1"	8"-12"	3'	60-90
Cantaloupe	May 1-20	1/2 "	2-3'	3-5'	80-100
Cucumber	Apr 10-30	1/2"	2-3'	3-5'	50-70
Eggplant	Apr 10-30		1.5'	3'	80-90
Okra	Apr 10-30	1"	1.5'	2-3'	60-70
Pepper	Apr 10-30		2'	3'	90-110
Pumpkin	Apr 10-30	1"	3-4'	5'	90-120
Southern Pea	May 1-June 10	1"	4"	3'	85-100
Squash (summer)	Apr 10-30	1"	3'	4'	40-60
Squash (winter)	May 15-June 15	1"	4'	5'	110-125
Sweet corn	Mar 15-Apr 15	1"	1.5'	3'	80-100
Sweet Potato	May 1-June 10		1'	3'	100-120
Tomato	Apr 10-30		2-3'	4'	70-90
Watermelon	May 10-20	1"	5-8'	5-8'	90-120

As we "go to press," much of Oklahoma is under a freeze advisory.

Indigenous Food of the Month: Onions by Vicky Karhu

Early spring means one thing to many Mvskoke people...time for the wild onion dinners to begin! Due to our very wet winter, there have already been reports of wild onions being harvested in Creek Country. This seasonal favorite is usually cooked with eggs and served hot. Many say that it is good to "clean the blood" after a winter of relative inactivity and rich foods. People have their favorite harvesting spots that are closely guarded family secrets. Many spend hours cleaning the harvest for church and other organization dinners.



Nutritionists and medical researchers have recently "discovered" what many Indigenous peoples already knew about this little, wild and flavorful weed that grows in moist conditions. It is good for your health. Onions, and their cousins leeks, shallots and scallions, contain the flavonoid quercetin that helps prevent harmful LDL cholesterol from oxidizing and sticking to artery walls and helps prevent platelets in the blood from sticking together to form clots. Red and yellow onions have more flavonoid content than white ones. Higher concentrations of quercetin are present in the outer layers of the onion.

A second beneficial group of compounds are the sulfur compounds that make you cry when cutting them. These compounds are said to help raise the HDL cholesterol and lower levels of triglycerides, thus thinning the blood just as your grandmother said they would. The sulfur compounds also have the effect of killing bacteria in the stomach that may lead to dangerous problems and even be a forerunner of cancer. They can inhibit the allergic inflammatory response experienced in asthma and other respiratory ailments. Maybe the

"old-timers" in Appalachia who advised people to put a poultice of slightly cooked onions on their chest to relieve the symptoms of chest colds and bad coughs knew this. People also put a slice of raw onion on insect bites to reduce the swelling.

You can enjoy onions either raw or cooked to receive the health benefits. The green part of young onions is a good source of Vitamins A and C and is more beneficial eaten raw or slightly cooked. To reduce the strong odor while preparing onions you can chill them for 30 minutes before cutting and avoid slicing through the root end, as that will release a puff of concentrated sulfur compounds when it is cut.

Onion skins can be saved and used as a dye to produce a soft brown color. They should not be put onto the compost pile, as they will repel earthworms that are essential to good compost.

It will soon be time to plant onions from sets that are already showing up at grocery and feed and seed stores. Onions prefer sandy loam, moist soil, but are flexible and will grow almost anywhere as long as it is not too acid. Plants should be spaced 3 to 4 inches apart 1 inch deep after danger of hard frost is past. Onions can take a light frost or moderately cold weather. The greens can be harvested for garnish or salads and the whole young onions can be used in many dishes. The onions need to be cultivated regularly to keep the weeds down. After about 100 days the bulbs will be mature and the seed heads will bend down to the ground. That's when it is time to harvest and dry them for several days. Then cut the leaves off to one inch above the bulb and dry some more before storing in a cool, dry place. Some people keep the leaves and braid the onions together with them. This will work as long as they are hung in a dry and well-ventilated place.

rBST, Its Whats for Dinner

What is recombinant bovine somatotropin? rBST, or RGBH, recombinant bovine growth hormone is an artificial growth hormone that increases milk productivity in cows.

Terms

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**Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)-
Insulin-Like Growth Factor 1, or IGF-1**

MFSI Classes Pumpkin Cooking Class

After being postponed twice due to winter weather, the long-awaited Pumpkin Cooking Class took place at Newtown Church Saturday, February 10th. The class was made possible with the support of the Creek Council House and Museum, through the efforts of David Anderson, Director, and Ted Isham, Curator. We would also like to thank Deana of the CCHM staff for taking class enrollments. Liz Holata and Donna Williams started things off by demonstrating the preparation of the pumpkin for cooking in any manner. We discussed preparing the seeds for saving or for roasting. Soon we had pumpkins ready to steam for soup and fry for the classic favorite entree with our lunch. The class took a break to enjoy pumpkin bread and roasted pumpkin seeds that Donna had prepared in advance.

Soon we reconvened to discuss the history of pumpkin and squashes in the Mvskoke and non-Indian diets. We shared recipes and learned several shortcuts for baking, steaming and boiling the pumpkins. Donna took us step by step through preparing excellent creamy pumpkin soup that can also be made with butternut squash. The class spent a lot of time in the kitchen watching the slow process of frying the pumpkin on low heat and under Liz's watchful eye.

The highlight of the class was the traditional meal. The menu was squirrel soup, wild onions and eggs, svpkvnpke, sofke, sour corn bread, steamed Swiss chard, pinto beans, pumpkin and butternut squash soups with pumpkin cookies, Amish apple pie and pumpkin-maple pudding for desert. Raspberry and blueberry iced teas topped it all off. A wide variety of garden seeds were distributed to all in attendance, as well as a tan field pumpkin for each student to take home.

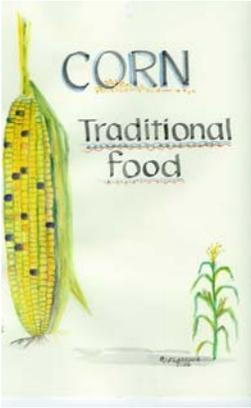
We look forward to more cooking classes and meals!!! Please support the Council House' gift shop and class offerings in 2007. MFSI hopes to partner with the CCHM on several projects this year in our joint efforts to preserve the Mvskoke people's cultural heritage.



Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative

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Calendar of Events

February 24, 1:00PM to 4:00 PM-MFSI will sponsor a *Community Gardens* workshop. Staff members (and experienced community gardeners) from Urban Harvest, in Oklahoma City, will be on-hand to discuss the practices that lead to a successful group effort. Soil preparation, planting arrangements, plants as pest control and mulching techniques will be discussed. So, if you plan to get your church, your family or other group into gardening in 2007, come to Okmulgee armed with your questions. The workshop will be held at the Creek Council House and Museum.

March 3, 1:00PM to 4:00 PM-MFSI will sponsor a work shop on soil conditioning and preparation, along with growing traditional corn. Kent Sanmann, a known expert on traditional native corn varieties is the featured speaker. Greg Hatfield, who operates a compost manufacturing business, will

speaking on soil science. The workshop will be held at the Creek Council House and Museum.

April 14th, All day, Pre-Earth Day Celebration-to be held on the lawn of the Creek Council House Museum. A day of Native American music, theatre and sustainable life ways honoring Mother Earth.

Community Food Assessment Survey Meetings at Creek Community Centers:

Holdenville-Saturday February 24th at 6:30 pm

Wilson-Thursday March 1st at 6:30 pm

Cromwell-Saturday March 10th at 9:00 am

Sapulpa- Saturday March 17th at 1:30 pm
