

Plant Exchange

Fresh From The Garden

What Does A Chef Do With Fresh Summer Produce?

Share tips from your outdoor or indoor plant experience, give us a tour of your plant site, or just let us know what you enjoy most about the plants and people who grow them. Contact news@yankton.net Attn: Brenda Johnson or write to P&D, 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078, Attn: Brenda Johnson.

BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON
P&D Correspondent

Chef Staci Stengle of Yankton Hy-Vee, 2100 Broadway [(605) 665-3412], answers a question about preparing her latest creation, an Edamame salad at her food sample station at the store. The couple had eaten the young green soybeans before at a sushi restaurant but how do they cook Edamame at home?

"I love Edamame fresh in salads," Stengle said. "They're also crunchy and bright to stir-fry." The shiny green beans are a little smaller than kidney beans. She offers them a taste of unseasoned beans and adds that they are available fresh and frozen. She walks with them to the endomane display.

These days, Stengle gets lots of questions about new ways to prepare fresh local produce, especially abundant garden harvest. Pick produce that is not over ripe and use it right away. No foot long, back-from-vacation zucchini. Use fresh produce in fresh recipes.

"A recipe is a suggestion," she said. "Take the recipe and make it your own, especially for summertime fresh or easy cook meals. Of course if you're baking you need to follow the recipe, because the interacting ingredients cause the bread to rise, etc." Her suggestions for fresh produce are simple to prepare, flavorful, and use minimal ingredients.

TOMATOES

"Pico De Gallo' (as a relish or with tortilla chips) needs fresh tomatoes, fresh cilantro, and fresh garlic, jalapeno, and lime juice. You can chop it by hand or use a food processor," she said.

"Last night I had a steak off the grill," she said. "With it I had a sliced tomato with a little olive oil and balsamic vinegar."

For the grill she suggests a foil package. "Layer tomato slices on the foil and then onion. Season with salt, pepper, and lemon juice. Add cod or salmon on top. Fold up the package and grill. As the fish cooks, the tomato forms a sauce that adds moisture to the fish," she said.

For an easy oven bake, she layers tomato, onion and zucchini. She drizzles with olive oil, salt, and pepper and adds grated Parmesan cheese. She bakes the dish for about twenty minutes to blend the flavors. She also likes this later, served cold.

"A slice of tomato tart with a rustic crust and a green salad makes a fine August meal," she said. "It's yummy with sliced red and yellow heirloom tomatoes, fresh basil, sea salt, a little balsamic vinegar and olive oil. You can add ricotta or goat cheese."

ZUCCHINI

Stengle adds sliced or grated zucchini to salads. If seeding is necessary, she halves the zucchini lengthwise, and uses the end of a vegetable peeler to scrape out the seed.

For grilled zucchini boats she remove seeds and stuffs the zucchini boats with cooked sausage, onion, and cheese. She removes the boats from the grill when the zucchini is soft and cheese is melted.

"Or you can grill planks of zucchini," she said. "Cut a slice down the side of the zucchini so it doesn't roll. Then slice planks (perpendicular to the cut). Splash with a vinaigrette and grill."

She likes to sauté zucchini with fresh herbs, a little olive oil, and a squeeze of lime. She mentions that yellow summer squashes are interchangeable with zucchini in recipes.

"Grilled summer vegetables make easy meals," Stengle said. Use what you have available. "You can grill squashes, eggplant, mushrooms, asparagus, red or green onions. Chop them and add soft vegetables such as rice or quinoa. Then you have a great salad. Or you could add salad greens."

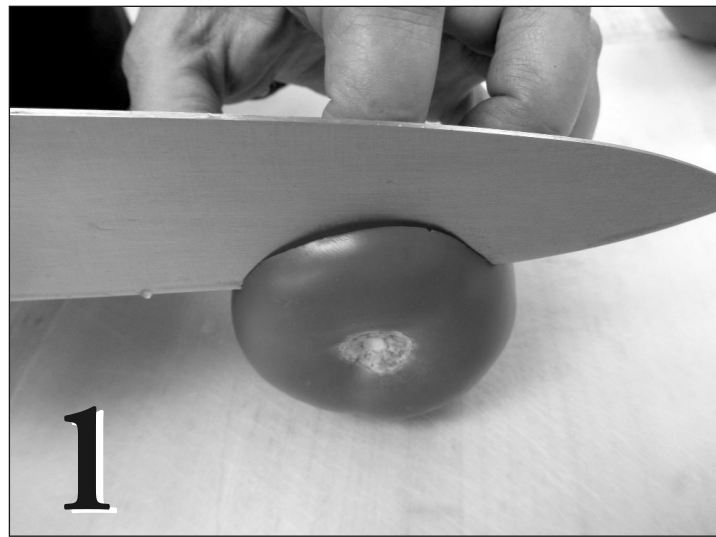
OTHER TIDBITS

Zucchini can be an additive to spaghetti sauce or vegetable soup. It compliments stronger flavors and doesn't compete. Shredded zucchini extends meat in meatloaf well and adds moisture to the meatloaf.

"My favorite dressing is a vinegar with olive oil, garlic, salt, and pepper," she said. "Grapefruit or orange juice in the vinaigrette is an alternative. Bottled vinaigrette is OK, but it has stabilizers, sometimes higher salt levels, and other processed ingredients to make it last. I'd rather have bottles of vinegar and olive oil that keep for months in the cupboard. Besides, you have worked hard to cultivate the flavors in the garden."

Many households that have a garden, supplement with grocery produce. Stengle points out banners in Hy-Vee produce area that recognize local fresh producers who supply heirloom tomatoes, corn, watermelons, squashes, pumpkins, honey and apple cider.

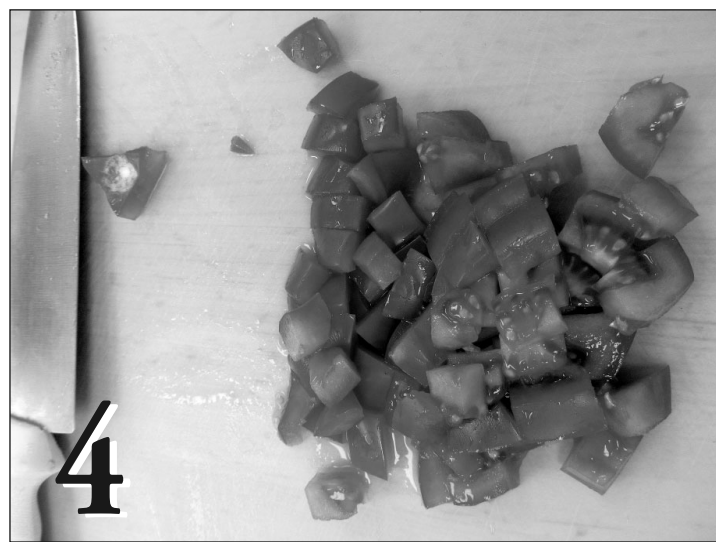
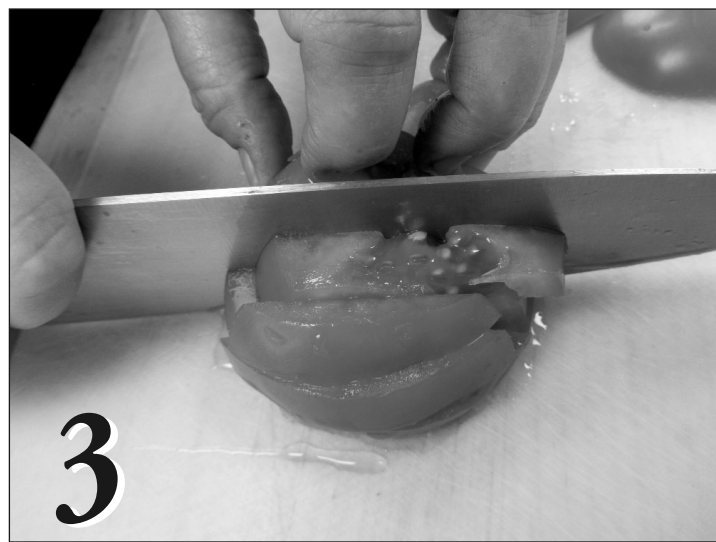
"I am here to ask me about food," Chef Staci Stengle said. "You add when you cook simply. Fresh food is about one step and cooked fresh food is about two steps."



1 Chef Staci Stengle shows how to properly dice a tomato for attractive results without waste of the fruit: **1) Begin slicing with the stem in the first slice with a sharp knife. Notice the fingers curved away from the knife blade. 2) Make slices uniform thickness. 3) Slice stack of slices in two directions with uni-**



2 form cuts with fingers curved away from knife blade. **4) Dice stem slice with same proportions as other uniform dices. Notice minimal waste of tomato. (Photos: Brenda K. Johnson)**



CHEF STACI STENGLE'S GRILLED EGGPLANT PIZZAS

- 1 large Eggplant- sliced
 - 2 tablespoons Kosher Salt
 - 2 tablespoons Olive Oil
 - ½ cup Hummus
 - Whole Wheat Pizza Crust or Flat Out Bread
 - 2 Tomatoes- sliced thin
 - 1 flat Anchovies- drained and rinsed
 - ½ cup Feta Cheese Crumbles
 - Fresh Ground Black Pepper
- Directions:
- Sprinkle eggplant slices with salt and let sit for ½ hour. Rinse and pat dry. Drizzle with olive oil and Grill over medium high heat, about 2-3 minutes per side until cooked, but still holding together.
 - Spread crust with hummus. Lay slices of tomatoes over hummus, and top with cooled eggplant and anchovy slices. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil. Sprinkle with cheese and black pepper.
 - Grill or bake according to crust directions, until heated through.

CHEF STACI STENGLE'S MOROCCAN EGGPLANT SOUP

- one large Eggplant chopped in 1 inch cubes
 - up to 6 Garlic Cloves chopped
 - 1 medium Onion chopped
 - 2 tablespoons Olive oil
 - 1 roasted Red Bell Pepper, thinly sliced
 - Spice Mix: 2 teaspoons Cumin (or Cumin Seeds toasted and crushed) and 2 teaspoons toasted and crushed Fennel Seeds
 - Salt and Pepper to taste
 - 6 cups of Soup Stock
 - 1 cup Basmati or Brown Rice
- Directions:
- Sauté onion and garlic in olive oil for 5 minutes.
 - Add spice mix and cook for 2 minutes
 - Add eggplant and red bell pepper and cook for 3 minutes.
 - Add 6 Cups chicken stock and rice.
 - Bring to a boil then simmer until the rice is done.
 - Optional: Puree half the soup and return to the pot.
 - Optional: Serve with plain yogurt and / or cilantro.

Meet Chef Staci

Chef Staci Stengle graduated from Culinary Institute of America, said to be a top school in its field, twenty-four years ago. While female chefs are still fewer than male chefs today, the ratio was nine men to one in her class. Today, Yankton Hy-Vee and the public can draw on her level of training and food industry experience. She shares her love of food with classes she teaches at Hy-Vee and presents talks about food and her profession to school groups, Girl Scouts, and others.

"Now kids wave to me," she said. Stengle is quite accessible to all in the public to answer food questions. "Mostly in the restaurant business, you are behind the swinging doors," she said.

Stengle grew up in Yankton and graduated from Yankton Public Schools.

"I watched Julia Child on television. She had such passion about food. She was my idol," Stengle said.

Before Stengle's senior year in high school, her uncle helped her get a summer job in a Connecticut restaurant. She worked as a fourth generation member in the family business, Boller Printing, to help earn her way to go to school in New York. She was accepted at the culinary school.

"It's what I dreamed to do," she said. It was a twenty-one month building block program with internships to practice skills learned in culinary French and Italian, business, math, and proper techniques for basic cooking techniques and cooking finesse.

She completed an internship at a boat club along Long Island, New York where the menu was tailored from the catch of the day, farmers' market and local vineyards. In another internship she worked in a busy restaurant in the New York City Theater District. Speaker for her graduation turned out to be Julia Child.

She learned more about vegetables and Cajun cooking when she worked in New Orleans. In Boulder, Colorado, and San Francisco, California she gained experience in hotels,

restaurants, and catering. When she moved home to Yankton, she owned a catering business, and is Chef at Hy-Vee the past four years.

"I get people excited about foods," she said. Once in a while she encounters push back. "A mom might say to her son who wants to try the fish at the sample station, 'We don't like salmon.' So then the child doesn't try the sample."

After a summer break Stengle starts cooking classes again at the clubroom in Hy-Vee in September.

"We want you to be able to cook it yourself and be able to expand on it," she said. She uses an overhead mirror as she demonstrates, hands out several recipes to follow as she cooks, and gives tips such as the differences between vinegars. Then the audience eats the food.

"I grew up watching people who like to cook," Stengle said. "My grandmother was a great cook. I liked to read cookbooks. Once I realized I could do this, I never thought of another profession."



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Cooperation among Yankton Parks & Recreation, Joe Hoffman and horticulture inmate students at Yankton Federal Prison Camp, and Keep Yankton Beautiful help keep Historic Downtown Yankton attractive with plants from spring until fall.

Hanging Around

Baskets Help Keep Downtown Yankton Attractive

Every job has surprises. If partners are cooperative, results can benefit all.

Two years ago Lisa Kortan, urban forester for the City of Yankton, works for Yankton Parks & Recreation Department. Two years ago she learned that they would assume the care of the half moon flower baskets on the light poles along Third Street. Yankton Downtown Association had formerly maintained the annuals.

"We didn't want the project to pass," Kortan said.

So for the past two seasons, Kortan and Parks & Recreation staff, and Joe Hoffman of Yankton Federal Prison Camp and his horticulture inmate students have planted the 64 baskets of annuals and the city staff cared for them.

In early April Hoffman and the inmates re-assembled the cocoa mat liners in baskets. They had been taken down after frost, cleaned and stored after frost last season by city staff. Inmates planted the baskets with plants supplied by the city in mid April.

"We got the plants from Kopesky Ace Hardware of Yankton," Kortan said. "We went with Super Red petunias. They are full size blooms and are self-cleaning, so no need to de-head. It's our first year to try them. We supplied spikes, vinca vine, asparagus fern. Joe threw in

some extra white bacopa he had."

"Aqua beads came from Bomgaars in Yankton. Joe likes to put a tablespoon or two in each basket to retain water. There's not much soil in the baskets with cocoa mats," she said.

"Baskets need to be watered daily," Kortan said. "Kris Ford, a Yankton elementary teacher and summer Parks & Recreation staff take care of the watering. Kris is great to work with."

Baskets of flowering plants were mounted on poles along Third St. on Memorial Day week. They last until frost and baskets will be removed and stored again.

To extend the plant season last year past frost, Keep Yankton Beautiful (KYB) and Joe Hoffman of Yankton Federal Prison Camp and his horticulture inmate students planted flowering kale and other fall plants in large planting pots along Third Street. Parks & Recreation staff kept them watered. They did this last fall for the South Dakota 125th Anniversary kickoff reenactments.

This fall, Historic Downtown Association plans the Harvest Halloween Festival for October 31st - November 1st. Again large planting pots of fall plants will display along Third St. with the help of KYB, Joe Hoffman and inmates under his direction at Yankton Federal Prison Camp, and Yankton Parks & Recreation staff. Partners compound each other's efforts.

August Plant Tips

Joann Fensel Ries is owner and experienced grower at Fensel's Greenhouse & Flower Shop, 500 N. Highway 81 in Freeman, S.D. (605) 925-4204 Thanks to Joann for her fall suggestions to keep your yard and garden in good shape.

• Prepare a landscape plan for fall planting new trees and shrubs.

• Keeping tall flowers and vegetables staked at this time is important.

• Don't skimp on fertilizer now. With cooler temperatures approaching, you may continue to enjoy annuals, rose bushes, and flowering containers for about two months or more.

• Water deeply and well, rather than shallow and often. Water early in the morning and try to avoid wetting the foliage. Foliage that remains wet overnight encourages fungus diseases to set in.

• Now is a good time to divide Bearded Iris. With a garden fork, carefully lift the iris out of the soil. Clean off old soil and rinse with garden hose. Let it dry and prune off foliage to about six

inches. Discard any iris with holes or soft spots. Then transplant iris so that crown (between leaf and roots) is positioned at soil level.

• Continue to check your yard and garden for insect pests and treat accordingly.

• Remove spent blooms on annuals and perennials. It makes plants look more attractive and encourages new blooms.