



Farmer In The Field

To eat or not to eat, that is the question

BONNIE SWANK

Although Labor Day marks the end of summer, for many people October is when the transition really begins into fall. Pumpkins, gourds and Indian corn start showing up in front yards and entry ways everywhere. These festive pops of color shout chilly nights, hot cocoa and the anticipation of Halloween. Purists pass up plastic pumpkins and decorations to make the yearly trek to their favorite pumpkin patch or roadside stand to gather their seasonal bounties. But what happens to these treasures as the season fades? Pumpkins that haven't been carved may become a tasty treat for the garden snails and gourds and Indian corn may make it to the Thanksgiving table. Then it's Christmas and sadly

much of what's left gets tossed out, but it doesn't have to.

What's edible and what's not? Let's start with gourds. Although pumpkins, cucumbers and gourds are all related, we'll focus on the non-edible gourds used for decorating. Varieties like the winged gourds may last a little longer if waxed than un-waxed but will eventually succumb to mold and dehydration. Bottle gourds on the other hand can live on in the craft world in the form of birdhouses or vessels. If this sounds like fun, do your homework first as the inside dust from the dried gourds can cause illness. If handled correctly, they can become a long lasting treasure.

Indian corn is edible but don't try eating it off the cob or you'll be making

a trip to the dentist. Varieties with large kernels can be ground into cornmeal or flour, and pointy varieties can be popped on the cob or off. Create fun projects with the kids by grinding, popping or just knocking the kernels off to feed to the wildlife or save for seed.

Pumpkins are squash and are totally edible, but the jack-o-lantern types don't have much flavor. Other varieties like Fairytale are delicious and can be used in all pumpkin recipes and even eaten raw. They last through the winter and are a definite favorite at the farmers market.

Bonnie and her husband, Dick Swank, are owners of Swank Farms in Hollister. Contact them at 831.637.4704. SwankFarms.com

Rigatoni with Roasted Pumpkin and Goat Cheese

Recipe courtesy of MarthaStuart.com

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 medium sugar pumpkin (about 4 pounds) peeled, seeded and cut into 2-inch chunks
- 4 shallots, peeled and quartered lengthwise
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh sage leaves
- Coarse salt and ground pepper
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- 12 ounces rigatoni
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 5 ounces fresh goat cheese, crumbled

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Divide pumpkin, shallots, oil and sage between two large rimmed baking sheets; season with salt and pepper and toss.

Roast until pumpkin is tender, 30 to 35 minutes, tossing once and rotating sheets halfway through.

In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta until al dente. Reserve 1/2 cup pasta water; drain pasta and return to pot. Add butter, cheese and pasta water; toss until butter has melted.

Gently fold in roasted pumpkin; season with salt and pepper. Divide among serving bowls and serve immediately.