



**THIS MONTH** ▶ Playing with pistachios ▶ My Shop with Rekha ▶ Wheat+Gluten

# The sumptuous world of native spices

## PART ONE

**Y**ou might have noticed we stock a range of indigenous spices such as roasted wattleseed, mountain pepper, native mint and lemon myrtle. And you might have been curious as to what to do with them but not known what. It's no surprise really; we haven't grown up with them. So how could we know? Well, that's all about to change. It's time we explored them and how to use them in recipes. This month we feature wattleseed and mountain pepper; and next native mint and lemon myrtle.



WATTLE TREE SEED PODS

### USING INDIGENOUS SPICES

In general, as with other spices, much of the flavour is lost during long cooking. So, it's best to add spices towards the

end of cooking (last 15 minutes). Long cooking often brings out a slightly bitter eucalyptus flavour; the exception being mountain pepperberry, which requires long cooking times to enhance its flavour and mellow its heat. Always store spices in an airtight container, in a cool dark place to preserve their aroma and flavour.

### ROASTED WATTLESEED

PLANT INFORMATION. Wattleseed (*Acacia victoriae*) grows in the very arid parts of central Australia and ours is wild-harvested by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. Many wattles have ▶ **2**



*what's good in fruit+veg with Renata Field*

We now stock fresh fruit+veg from Champion Organics in Mangrove Mountain on the Central Coast. It's delivered on Monday mornings and we're currently receiving persimmons, lettuce, herbs, watermelon, snake beans and rhubarb. For more info, see [www.championorganics.com.au](http://www.championorganics.com.au)

- ▶ **GRAPEFRUIT:** Ruby grapefruits, juicy with a tang
- ▶ **GUAVA:** Soft and sweet inside.
- ▶ **PERSIMMON:** Perfectly ripe when soft and squishy – worth it

- ▶ **CUCUMBER:** Local FD produce – try the crispy white apple variety
- ▶ **CHILLIES:** Local FD
- ▶ **EGGPLANT:** Now mid-season
- ▶ **GRAPES:** Many, many varieties
- ▶ **FRESH HERBS:** Basil, parsley, thyme, sage, dill and more In the shop fridge
- ▶ **LIMES:** FD, yellow ones are the ripest
- ▶ **PEARS:** China variety have a hard skin, but are pearfect and juicy inside!
- ▶ **RHUBARB:** Bake with apples
- ▶ **ROCKET:** Fresh with a bite
- ▶ **SEBAGO POTATOES:** Local FD
- ▶ **SQUASH:** 4 varieties to try
- ▶ **WATERMELON:** Sweet, juicy
- ▶ **ZUCCHINI:** Perfect right now

### ON THEIR WAY OUT

- ▶ **CORN:** Very sweet, raw or cooked
- ▶ **PASSIONFRUIT:** Sweet and juicy FD
- ▶ **PLUMS:** Soft, sweet and squishy,
- ▶ **STONE FRUIT:** The last of the peaches and nectarines

### WHAT'S GOOD NOW

- ▶ **BEANS, SNAKE and GREEN**
- ▶ **CAPSICUM:** Crispy and delicious

### NEW ARRIVALS

- ▶ **APPLES:** Golden delicious, jonathans, red splendours from Victoria. More soon.
- ▶ **CUSTARD APPLES:** Early season, sweet and soft
- ▶ **LEMONADES:** Between a mandarin and a lemon, sweet and tangy

■ If you'd like to ask me about anything, or to order in bulk, please email [produce@alfalfahouse.org](mailto:produce@alfalfahouse.org) ■ FD: Farmer-Direct

■ For week-to-week fruit+veg availability: go to [www.alfalfahouse.org/html/PRODUCTS/fruit+veg.htm](http://www.alfalfahouse.org/html/PRODUCTS/fruit+veg.htm)

edible seed including the Sydney Golden Wattle. Aboriginal people have been using wattleseed for thousands of years as a staple but these days it's more commonly used as a spice when roasted and ground, which release its flavours.

#### HOW TO USE

- Use as a flavouring, as you would chocolate, coffee, walnut and hazelnut.
- Add 1–2 tablespoons to bread and cake recipes or to pancake batter or to a cheesecake.
- Combine with lemon myrtle and sprinkle on tofu before cooking.
- In cream sauces for pasta or tofu and it goes very well with milk products.
- In uncooked dishes, let the flavour infuse overnight.
- In desserts, it blends well with vanilla and cinnamon.
- In savoury dishes, it complements lemon myrtle, bush tomato or mountain pepper.
- As a general guide, use one teaspoon per 500g of other ingredients in savoury dishes, one tablespoon per 500g in desserts.
- Wattleseed also makes a good caffeine-free coffee; add a teaspoon to a cup or plunger and pour over boiling water. Allow to stand a few minutes. The used grounds can be used again to flavour biscuits, cream, ice cream.

## Recipes

### Banana and Wattleseed Cake

SERVES 12. Prep time: 20 minutes  
Cooking time: 1 hour

- 125g butter
- 125g rapadura sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla essence
- 1 tbsp wattleseed
- 4 medium sized bananas
- 1 tsp bicarb soda
- 125ml milk
- 300g flour
- 3 tsp baking powder

Beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, beating thoroughly after each egg. Add vanilla essence, wattleseed and bananas. Beat until just

combined. Sift the flour with soda and baking powder. Fold in flour alternately with milk. Pour mixture into a cake tin and bake for approx. 1 hour at 180°C.

### Wattleseed Icecream

SERVES 8. Prep time: 20 minutes + four hours freezing time. No cooking required

- ½ litre cream
- 4 egg whites
- 4 egg yolks
- 4 tbsp pure icing sugar
- 1 tbsp wattleseed

Whip egg whites till they form soft peaks. Set aside. Whip egg yolks and sugar till light and fluffy. Set aside.



MOUNTAIN PEPPER

Whip cream. Mix with egg yolk and sugar mix and lemon myrtle. Gently mix in egg whites, making sure you don't beat the air out of the whites. Pour into your choice of container and

freeze till hard – four hours, depending on the size of container.

### MOUNTAIN PEPPER

**PLANT INFORMATION** Mountain pepper (*Tasmannia lanceolata*), a small tree that grows to five metres, is found in south-east NSW, Victoria and Tasmania. Both the leaves and berries contain a compound called polygodial which gives them their characteristic hot taste. Most mountain pepper is wild-harvested by hand, however, commercial plantations are now emerging to meet demand.

**HOW TO USE** The heat of the pepper decreases with cooking time so add a little just before serving if you like the taste of pepper. It has a very spicy fruity flavour followed by a hot peppery taste. Sprinkle mountain pepper leaf on tofu, chicken, fish, beef, pork or lamb before cooking, alone or in combination with other herbs or spices. Use in marinades, rub onto tofu or meat or use in a dip. Mountain pepper leaf goes especially well with potatoes. It goes well with most vegetables and gives a refreshing lift to salad dressings, pasta dough, sauce or bread.

## Recipe

### Potato Pancake with Mushroom Sauté and Rocket Salad

SERVES 6

- 1 kg potatoes
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp mountain pepper, ground
- 180g flour, amount may depend on type of potato
- Oil for frying

#### Potato pancake

Boil potatoes with skin on. Cool slightly, peel and mash with salt and mountain pepper. Cool completely. Knead mash with flour. Dough should be of a consistency that can be rolled out. Divide dough into 12 balls. Roll each out into a 15–20cm diameter pancake. Fry pancakes on a pan with a little oil, turning frequently. This can be done hours earlier. Reheat pancakes prior to serving.

#### Mixed mushroom sauté

- 200g mixed mushrooms
- 10g dried shiitake mushrooms
- 1 small leek
- 1 small zucchini (100g)
- 100ml cream (option: use water or stock with a little arrowroot starch or kuzu dissolved in cold water instead)
- 1 sprig rosemary
- lemon myrtle to taste, ground
- salt to taste

Soak shiitake mushrooms in enough warm water to cover them. Slice leek and zucchini in 1cm slices. Break or cut mushrooms into desirable pieces (not too small). Sauté leek and rosemary then add zucchini. Sauté a few minutes then add mixed mushrooms. Add shiitake and cream. Add salt and lemon myrtle.

To serve, place two folded pancakes on each plate with the mixed mushroom sauté inside the folded pancake. Accompany with a rocket salad tossed with vinaigrette.

**NEXT MONTH:** Native mint and Lemon Myrtle

■ Recipes from Kurrajong Native Foods ([www.bushtuckerstore.com.au](http://www.bushtuckerstore.com.au)) and OzTukka ([www.oztukka.com.au](http://www.oztukka.com.au))

**PLEASE NOTE** that any nutritional advice given in the eNews is of a general nature only and does not take into account individual circumstances or needs. It is not intended as a substitute for professional advice. Alfalfa House encourages readers to seek specific advice from health professionals as needed.

# WHEAT & GLUTEN

*Welcome* to the first of a regular series on food allergies and food intolerance.

Each time we'll look at a different food or food group, including identifying 'naturally occurring' chemicals responsible for adverse reactions and we'll suggest alternative 'safe' foods and 'low-chemical' foods. And, of course, a recipe.

While I'm not your 'doctor', I am a mum with five years' personal experience – the age of my food-sensitive boy. So I've done plenty of necessary research and dietary experimenting. I also welcome your feedback and encourage you to share your experiences. Email me c/o [info@alfalfahouse.org](mailto:info@alfalfahouse.org).

**AI**  
ALLERGIES &  
INTOLERANCES  
TAMARA KILLICK



## THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF FOOD ALLERGY AND FOOD INTOLERANCE: SOME STATS

- Most reactions to food are food intolerances
- Number of Australians with an allergy  
CHILDREN: 1 in 20  
ADULTS: 1 in 100
- 60% of allergies appear in the first year of life.

## FOOD ALLERGY OR FOOD INTOLERANCE?

### ALLERGY

*Definition: an auto-immune response to a specific part of a food, usually a complex protein component.*

**WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODY?** As if being threatened by a toxic substance, the body's immune system reacts to what is in fact a 'harmless' food substance. The body goes into shock (anaphylaxis), ultimately leading to heart failure. For some people ingestion or even trace amounts of cross-contamination from a specific allergen can be fatal if medical treatment isn't sought immediately.

MORE INFO on [www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au)

### INTOLERANCE

*Definition: A chemical reaction that occurs after eating or drinking some foods. Reaction to a food chemical is accumulative so the symptoms may not appear until some days after a food is eaten. To remain free of symptoms a carefully planned, moderated diet is required.*

**WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODY?** It is not an autoimmune response, but rather a sensitivity to chemicals present in the food, i.e., naturally-occurring chemicals and preservatives, and/or artificial chemicals. Depending on the person and the food ingested, symptoms can include one or more of the following: hives, headaches, tiredness, irritability, and stomach problems. Food intolerance can also be associated with asthma, chronic fatigue syndrome and irritable bowel syndrome.

## DEFINITIONS

**WHEAT ALLERGY.** A severe and sudden onset allergic reaction to a protein component in the grain. To a very small number of people, contact with a wheat allergen can be fatal – allergic shock or anaphylaxis.

**WHEAT INTOLERANCE.** Difficulty digesting gluten, a complex protein found in wheat and other grains, including rye, barley and oats. Sensitivity to gluten produces a reaction that is slower than an allergic reaction, with a varying degree of symptoms depending on the quantity of gluten ingested.

**GLUTEN INTOLERANCE.** A digestive system response to the gluten protein present in wheat and related grains. Gluten gives baked goods that springy bounce and also keeps bread from crumbling. As with wheat intolerance and depending on sensitivity, some people may tolerate small amounts of gluten.

**CELIAC DISEASE.** An immune reaction to gluten, more specifically to gliadin – a known intestinal irritant – present in gluten. As with other severe allergic reactions, the body's immune system responds to gluten as though it were a toxic substance. Put simply, the small intestine inevitably becomes damaged and the body consequently fails to take up vital nutrients. People with celiac disease must maintain a strict gluten-free diet their entire lives.

## THE WHEAT WE EAT

Wheat and other grains containing gluten are among the most commonly-used ingredients in food preparation. They're in pasta, bread, flat bread, pizza base, pancakes, cakes and slices, biscuits, breakfast cereal, muesli snacks, savoury snacks. So the task of avoiding gluten almost requires a degree in food science. Avoiding wheat, and in particular gluten, takes a serious commitment to one's health, notwithstanding a thick skin to deal with the social pressure.

## SNEAKY WHEAT

Wheat and gluten are used in a variety of foods such as sweets (caramel), sauces and condiments, beverages (beer, scotch). For a comprehensive A-Z list go to: <http://celiac-disease.com/food-ingredients-that-contain-gluten/>

The safest bet, even if it appears to be wheat-free, is to always read the ingredients on the label.

## WHAT'S SAFE IN THE CO-OP

**GRAINS** rice, quinoa, amaranth, millet, Andean mix (white, red, and black quinoa, amaranth), buckwheat

**CEREALS** puffed amaranth, puffed millet, puffed brown rice, puffed quinoa, puffed buckwheat, rolled amaranth, rolled quinoa, rolled brown rice, buckwheat grawnola, Alfalfa's Own muesli (a blend of rolled quinoa, gluten free multi-puffs, shredded coconut, chia seeds, cranberries and black mission figs)

**PASTA** brown rice penne, rice-based macaroni, quinoa/brown rice penne, millet couscous

**NOODLES** Soba (100% buckwheat)

**FLOURS** amaranth flour, chickpea flour (besan), buckwheat flour, brown rice flour, soya flour, quinoa flour

**BREADS** Naturis organic sourdough – buckwheat or rice

## SNACKS+SWEET TREATS

Inana's halva gems, Spiral mung bean chips, Spiral rice crackers (tamari or Black sesame), Rice cakes, Loving Earth raw chocolates, Kitzbars

## CAFÉS+RESTAURANTS

There are many cafés and restaurants in Sydney that cater for people with a wheat allergy and/or gluten intolerance. I've listed a few here, but for a more extensive list go to the Celiac NSW website [www.nswcoeliac.org.au/Places\\_to\\_eat.htm](http://www.nswcoeliac.org.au/Places_to_eat.htm)

The Peasants Feast  
121a King Street Newtown 9516 5998  
The Razors Edge  
129 Enmore Road Enmore 9557 5867  
IKU Wholefoods  
25a Glebe Point Road Glebe 9692 8720  
Dare Foods (Delicious and Responsible Eating) Shop 22, Rocks Centre, Playfair Street The Rocks 9251 1445 (has gluten-free beer)

## RECIPE

**Gluten-free pizza base**  
adapted from [glutenfree.net.au](http://glutenfree.net.au)

### INGREDIENTS

- 275g gluten-free flour (for a lighter dough try combining two GF flours)
  - 1 tsp gluten-free baking powder
  - pinch sea salt
  - 1 egg (or equivalent egg replacer)
  - 150ml natural yoghurt
- Alfalfa House stocks all ingredients*

### METHOD

- Place baking mix and salt into a bowl
- Beat eggs with yogurt and gradually fold into the dry ingredients until a soft dough is formed
- Knead lightly on a lightly floured surface (use baking mix) and roll out to cover base of a 20cm round baking tin
- Spread with your favourite toppings
- Bake at 200°C for 25 minutes until the base is cooked through.

## RESOURCE

**FRIENDLY FOOD: FOOD FOR LIFE**  
by Dr Anne R Swaine, Dr Velencia L Soutter and Dr Robert H Loblay  
An excellent resource, loaded with safe/alternative recipes, charts, facts, info. Available from most bookshops or from RPA's Allergy Unit in Camperdown.

## SOURCES

- The Australian Celiac Society
- The RPA Allergy
- *Wheat Intolerance and Wheat Sensitivity* Deborah Manners, 2007 [www.foodintol.com](http://www.foodintol.com)
- *Wheat Allergy* Velencia Soutter, Anne Swain, Robert Loblay, RPA Allergy Unit 2002
- *Wheat allergies, intolerance and coeliac disease* Melanie Hearse 2008 [www.superliving.com.au](http://www.superliving.com.au)
- *The Optimum Nutrition Bible* Patrick Holford, 1997
- Your Gluten Free Life, <http://glutenfree.net.au/2008/04/pizza-base/>

## Urban Orchard at DIY markets

The local produce swap is at the DIY Markets (opp. Newtown Station) the last Saturday of the month from 10am-noon. Urban Orchard is where you share excess produce (fruit+veg, herbs) from your garden, and/or food you've gleaned from your neighbourhood. No cash, completely informal, plenty of fun. You can even swap recipes and tips. If you'd like to get involved, email Renata at [produce@alfalfahouse.org](mailto:produce@alfalfahouse.org).



AN INITIATIVE OF ALFALFA HOUSE



**Volunteers** are needed to help with research (at home) as well as in-store events. If interested, please email **Monika** ([groceries@alfalfahouse.org](mailto:groceries@alfalfahouse.org)) with details as to when you're available and what you'd like to help with. Thanks.

## FREE 2009 CALENDAR WITH SAMPLES+GIFTS

Don't forget to pick up your free Alfalfa House calendar next time you're shopping or print your own from the website's NEWS page. Each calendar features a number of coupons that you can redeem for free samples and gifts. During April, spend \$60 and receive a Loving Earth raw chocolate bar and an Alfalfa surprise birthday gift.

**PRINT YOUR OWN CALENDAR. GO TO**  
[www.alfalfahouse.org/assets/downloads/ah\\_calendar09.pdf](http://www.alfalfahouse.org/assets/downloads/ah_calendar09.pdf)

# MY SHOP WITH REKHA SANGHI

INTERVIEW *by* TAMARA KILLICK

## How did you discover Alfalfa House?

I think from just living in the area. When you're unemployed and a student, as I was at the time, you have free time and walk around a lot looking for new and interesting places and things to do. The style of shopping appealed to me, where you take your own jars and bags.

## How long have you been a member?

Twelve or thirteen years. Maybe longer!

## How often do shop at Alfalfa?

Once a week, once a fortnight. I tend to stock up on staples like rice, pasta, nuts, tofu.

## What's your favourite Alfalfa purchase?

I like the little treats. The kinds of things that are uncommon to conventional shops, such as the cocoa butter, tamari almonds, choc-coated 'anything'. Also, I like the organic rice and other organic grains.

## Tell me five things you enjoy most about shopping at Alfalfa?

1. I like that it's small and intimate, you don't feel bombarded by bad muzak and bright lights
2. Taking your own packaging
3. being exposed to new foods and ingredients
4. because of the bulk supply you don't have to buy heaps of something when you only need ½ cup – so you can try it out before committing to buying large quantities
5. being a vego, I like that Alfalfa is a one-stop shop, things such as quinoa; it's delicious and so easy to cook
6. I like the seasonal aspect of it; It forces you try different fruit and veg that you may not eat. Unlike conventional shops you're not inundated with hundreds of everything – just a few nice things and importantly seasonal produce.

*(Tamara: Okay, so I asked for five things, but I couldn't leave the last one out.)*

## What are your favourite ingredients to cook with and what do you do with them?

Broccoli, tamari, basil, tofu. I love a good stir fry, or curry, and my daughter eats broccoli any old way, which is great.



## Have you met any interesting people or developed any meaningful relationships over the years shopping at Alfalfa?

To be honest I can't say I have actually developed any ongoing friendships as such, however, it's always nice to see familiar faces at the co-op. I enjoy the random chats that pop up while shopping.

## Do you read the eNews?

Yes. I love getting it in my inbox. It's really informative and offers a different take on what you might read elsewhere. I find the section on what's new and what's in season helpful, also the recipes are great.

## Do you volunteer at Alfalfa?

Not at the moment. It's been about ten years but I have volunteered in the past. I had a lot more time back then. Now I'm a full-time mum and I work part-time, however, I'm still really committed to Alfalfa. I don't shop anywhere else for organic produce and I am very supportive of the co-op philosophy and Alfalfa's role in the community. I would like to get involved in volunteering again if there is a job that I could do from home.

## When you were volunteering what kinds of jobs did you do?

I did do a stint at the checkout but mainly worked out in the back of the shop doing the re-stocking, cleaning

and filling up tubs.

## What did you enjoy most about volunteering?

I enjoyed giving back as well as the 25% discount, which is generous, so it's worth volunteering for. It can be very expensive to maintain an organic pantry and fridge!

## Is there anything new you would like to see at Alfalfa?

It would be great to see a bigger range of baby-friendly products. I think it could increase Alfalfa's market. I know that people make eco-cloth nappies with various unique features, such as pockets. If they could put their range of nappies in Alfalfa it could broaden the market and sales. The inner west is getting gentrified so by having a broader range of kid-friendly items it could attract more shoppers. It would also be great to see the shop open earlier if possible. Even 10am would be helpful, or even an early start a couple of days a week. I find that by 11am it's just that little bit too late in the morning to fit in with everything else that's going on around that time.

## Any final words?

Go Alfalfa! It's a great co-op that has lasted through the decades with a great philosophy and dedicated teams.

# Up close with the pistachio

BY RENATA FIELD

**E**ver eaten fresh pistachios? They're such a tasty treat. Soft and subtle, sweet, fresh and nutty.

I'm just back from a quick trip to the Food Forest in South Australia, from which Alfalfa House gets its pistachios. The Food Forest is a permaculture property, just north of Adelaide, and now almost 25 years old. The farm is owned by two inspiring permaculturists Anne-Marie and Graham Brookman, who happily share their wealth of knowledge through tours, workshops, permaculture design courses and hosting landcare groups and wwoofers (willing workers on organic farms).

The Food Forest's main crops are pistachios and carobs, however, the farm follows the permaculture principle of diversity, combining orchards of stone fruit, apples and pears, other nut varieties as well as rare fruit varieties, a market garden and revegetated bush.

Ripe pistachios sit on trees like bunches of baby pink coloured flowers. Harvesting them is a little less delicate! In groups of four, we lay out two large tarps under the trees then shake each tree or hit the bunches with poplar poles onto the tarps. After a few trees, when the tarp is usually too heavy to drag, we empty the contents into large wooden crates covered with coarse wire mesh to sift out the leaves and twigs. From there, the tractor takes them to be processed.

Pistachios are covered with a light pink, mango-smelling hull that must be removed; the Brookmans have a dehuller for this. The nuts are also put through a little bath where the ones without a



PISTACHIOS IN FULL-BLOOM



kernel float and are removed for composting.

Next the nuts are spin-dried in an old washing machine, then put on trays in a dehydrator for between 36–48 hours to reduce their moisture content to under 12%. The end result is the tastiest pistachio I've ever tried – they don't need to be salted.

It was great to be involved in the process of making our food grow, and to be on a property that is an example of self-sufficiency in action.

■ There's more on the Food Forest and



IN HARVEST-MODE

pistachio harvesting courtesy of ABC1's Landline special on the Brookmans ([www.abc.net.au/landline/content/2006/2208413.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/landline/content/2006/2208413.htm)).

## POSITIONS VACANT

### Two spots on the MC

There are two vacancies on the co-op's board, known as the Management Committee (MC). If you'd like to help shape the direction of Alfalfa House, why not join? To find out more, including Directors' Duties and the minutes from the meetings, go to [www.alfalfahouse.org/html/who\\_are\\_we.htm](http://www.alfalfahouse.org/html/who_are_we.htm). If you'd like to chat to an MC member about it, email [coordinator@alfalfahouse.org](mailto:coordinator@alfalfahouse.org).

## PRICEWATCH

Product	Alfalfa House* Cert. Organic	Health Food Store Cert. Organic	Supermarket Cert. Organic	Supermarket Not Organic
Soap, personal, pure 100g	\$2.46	\$3.80	\$2.06	\$0.82
Tofu, firm, 100g	\$1.49	\$1.90	\$1.39	\$0.99
Cheese, Edam, 100g	\$3.78	\$4.20	\$3.27	\$2.72
Plums, Radiance, 100g	\$0.97	\$0.80	NA	\$0.30
Earl Grey tea, loose leaf, 100g	\$6.67	\$7.80	NA	\$2.45

SURVEY NUMBER 7, APRIL 2009 ■ NA: not available

\*PRICES ARE WITH THE BASIC 10% MEMBER DISCOUNT.

– Compiled by Jo Rose

## New rices from Thailand

While we no longer stock Australian-grown organic brown or white rice (because it is no longer grown), we do have a number of varieties of rice in the shop, some of which are new. And they *are* organic or chemical-free and Fairtrade and grown in a country better suited to growing rice than the driest inhabited continent on the planet. Our white jasmine, coral, purple, and black rices all come via Alter Eco, which only buys Fairtrade organic products. The company works directly with growers to set up farmer co-ops and the farmers themselves decide how to invest the higher prices they receive for their rice.

These rices are grown in Thailand, which isn't too far away. The black and purple rices are new to Alfalfa while the coral rice is now back in stock, along with the jasmine. All are bought in bulk, thanks to the efforts of various food co-ops, including Alfalfa, in persuading AlterEco and the producer co-ops to offer a bulk range as well as the pre-pack with which they began. It's taken a couple of years to get there but it underscores how food co-ops can help reshape the food system.

**White jasmine** As its name 'Hom Malee' or 'scented rice' indicates, jasmine rice develops a delicate aroma when cooked for 15 minutes and brings out the perfume of a jasmine blossom. This unique aroma is a result of the dry, salty soil specific to the Isan plateau in Thailand. It can be used as a main dish, a side dish or, as in Thailand, a snack and is produced by the Surin co-op.

**Coral rice** (*Khao Deng* variety) is derived from an ancient red rice grain and obtained by a natural technique using traditional millstones. The polished grains acquire a coral colour and while the grains retain all the natural richness and minerals of wholegrain red rice, they're lighter and easier to digest. The coral colour remains when cooked for no more than 15 minutes.

**Purple rice** is of the *Khao Gram* variety, glutinous when cooked and has a delicate, sweet palate. Due to its rich taste and aesthetic appeal, this traditional rice is used by local communities for feasts and celebrations. It is grown exclusively in the fertile soil of the Esan Plateau, in Thailand's east, close to the Cambodian border. The purple rice is mixed white jasmine to give it an better texture yet retaining its colour and sweet flavour. It's grown without chemical fertilisers by the Phakao Cooperative.

**Black rice** – aka king of the golden triangle – is a rare heirloom wholegrain variety from Thailand's Chian Mai region. It is deep black in colour, has a nutty flavour with notes of pepper and a crunchy texture. It's also grown without chemical fertilisers.

MORE INFO on the farmers' co-ops go to [www.alfalfahouse.org/html/PRODUCTS/SPECIFIC\\_PRODUCTS/thai\\_rices.htm](http://www.alfalfahouse.org/html/PRODUCTS/SPECIFIC_PRODUCTS/thai_rices.htm)

# All that fuss

Setting up children's healthy eating habits early – right from their very first bites, through their toddler years is the most important thing we can do for their health. Because adolescents and adults tend to be drawn to those foods that featured heavily in their early diets, it's important to start them healthy now and keep them healthy for life. While this ensures their vitamin and mineral intake is sufficient to sustain their busy lives, it also gives them a better chance against eating disorders and obesity later in life.

**Young children are considered fussy eaters.** Aim to keep foods and meals varied and remember to introduce children to foods that you yourself may not like. They may have different tastes to you and they may prefer other foods. Parents tend to give up after two or three times when their child rejects a new food, but don't be put off. Research shows that it can in fact take up to ten attempts before a food is accepted into the diet.

**Lumpy foods and foods with a little texture need to be introduced early.** Again, research shows that introducing more textured food later can lead to children becoming fussy. So don't purée all those lumps out to achieve that ultra-smooth finish; just simply mash the food with a fork or leave some soft lumps in there.

**Don't stress that your child is not eating enough.** If your child seems healthy and has no trouble running around energetically and driving you mad, then they are eating enough! Remember too that as they go through their toddler years, their growth rate begins to slow and this may affect how much food they need.

**Make mealtimes enjoyable,**



not a struggle over food and don't use food treats as a bribe to get them to eat meals. This sets up bad eating patterns for life. Regulate eating times and patterns and involve children who are old

enough in the preparation of their meals. Include a range of colourful foods and allow the kids to choose from them. Encourage self-feeding as much as possible. Remember that children's stomachs are small and ensure that they are not filling up on juice or other fluids before their meals. Try not to eat too late in the evening when they simply may be too tired.

**A quick, easy, lumpy custard recipe**

**Banana custard** made straight from your fruit bowl is a very yummy and natural alternative to the highly processed, laden-with-sugar version you can get in supermarkets. Blend a small banana with a couple of chunks of celery. Ensure that you blend until the celery is completely smooth. Mash another banana and mix it gently into the puree to create a more custard-like consistency. I find bananas puréed on their own can be a little too sweet and the celery cuts the sweetness without taking over the taste. Bananas provide plenty of vitamin C, some of the B vitamins, potassium, magnesium, manganese and even the omegas 3 and 6, while celery adds sodium, vitamin A, K and folate. A lovely little vitamin and mineral meal that tastes great too. Give it a try with those delicious Lady Finger bananas in season now.

You can also introduce children to the more exotic fruits and vegetables when they are in season such as the ultra-colourful dragonfruit.

# Recipes of the moment

## Vanilla Sago Pudding

GLUTEN-FREE. CAN BE VEGAN BY OMITTING EGG.  
SERVES 6

- 2/3 cup sago
- 800ml cups coconut milk
- 2/3 cup rapadura sugar or half a cup of agave syrup or honey
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 vanilla bean, split, with seeds scraped
- 1 egg, separated (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Split the vanilla bean lengthwise and scrap the seeds from the pod. Use both the pod and the seeds – splitting the bean exposes more of the surface of the bean to release a stronger flavour.
- Put all ingredients in a heavy saucepan. Cook over low heat 15–20 minutes, stirring regularly. Be sure to stir the bottom of the pan to prevent scorching. When sago pearls are slightly translucent, remove pan from heat. Let cool slightly.
- Whisk in egg yolk. Cool completely.
- When cool, beat egg white until stiff and fold in. Remove vanilla bean and spoon tapioca into bowls. Garnish with fresh seasonal tropical fruits and grated or dessicated coconut, if desired.



such as cinnamon and vanilla, to make the drink more agreeable to European tastes. This beverage evolved into the more familiar hot chocolate we have today.

- 3/4 cup rapadura sugar
- 2 vanilla beans, sliced open
- 1/2 cup cacao powder or unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp cayenne powder (optional)
- Split open the vanilla beans and scrape out the seeds. Retain the pods for use in other recipes such as the pudding.
- Add to remaining ingredients and blend for 30 seconds.
- Store in an airtight container. The mix will keep for two months. Use about 1/2 cup of the mix in hot water or to desired strength. Add your favourite milk if preferred.

OPTION. For a Mocha Mix, add one teaspoon of instant espresso powder.

**HOW TO PREP THE BEAN.** To cut open a vanilla bean lay it flat on a cutting surface. Hold one end of the bean to the surface and carefully slice the bean open lengthwise (above right). When separated, thousands of tiny seeds are exposed. You can scrape the seeds



from the pod before removing the bean if you choose. Vanilla beans can usually be used several times depending on how strenuously you've used them. For instance, if you've placed a vanilla bean in a pitcher of lemonade, the bean will still contain a lot of flavour when the beverage is gone. Rinse and dry the bean pieces after using them. If there is only the pod left or if you've used the bean several times, let the pieces dry and retire them to the sugar or coffee jar as they will exude a delicate flavour and fragrance for some time to come. Beans that have been used once or twice can also be ground and used to add extra flavour to icecream, biscuits and cakes.

**STORAGE.** Vanilla beans will keep indefinitely in an airtight container in a cool, dark place. Don't refrigerate them as they can harden and crystallise. Dry or withered beans can be rehydrated in a warm liquid and will still contain flavour.

■ All past recipes are on the website. Go to [www.alfalfahouse.org/html/recipes.htm](http://www.alfalfahouse.org/html/recipes.htm)

## Vanilla-infused hot chocolate

SERVES 2-4



The Aztecs and Mayans drank ground cacao beans mixed with water in a beverage called *xocoatl*, or bitter water. Europeans later added sugar and spices,

**Gravity Feed Bin Raffle Winner for March is Danny Hirschfield**  
CONGRATULATIONS

## WE WANT TO BE FLOORED

The co-op's office floor needs some work. Do you have materials (lino or masonite or similar) you could donate or know where we can procure them and/or can you help us with the work to put flooring in place? Contact Nija 9519 3374 or email: [coordinator@alfalfahouse.org](mailto:coordinator@alfalfahouse.org)

## HELP ON A STALL

### Cooks River Sustainability Festival

SUNDAY APRIL 19, 2009

Three shifts 10.30am-12.30pm, 12.30-2.30pm, 2.30-4.30pm  
Help on a stall promoting the co-op and selling pre-packaged stock. Simple and lots of fun. If you're interested in volunteering at any time on the day, please email Jo ([redrosiejo@gmail.com](mailto:redrosiejo@gmail.com)).

## FEED THE eNEWS

This newsletter is your voice and a great way to communicate with other members. Please feel free to send in your hints, tips, ideas, suggestions and recipes to [feedback@alfalfahouse.org](mailto:feedback@alfalfahouse.org)

E-News is edited and designed by Stevie Bee for Alfalfa House Community Food Cooperative Ltd

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