



THIS MONTH ▶ Noodles **3-4** ▶ A year later **5** ▶ Coriander+Cardamom **8**

Just fifteen bins to go

We've reached our fundraising target for the next stage of the gravity bin instal and can now order eight more regular-size gravity bins for the semolina, buckwheat, couscous and so forth on the shelves next to the pasta and eight larger-sized bins for the puffed cereals. Many thanks to all who've helped with this round of fundraising – members who donated

cash; people who helped sell chocolates at their work; members who bought fundraiser stock; and also to suppliers who either gave us in-kind donations or cash, among them Loving Earth (coconut sugar and chocolate) and Demeter Farm Mill (\$100).

This means we're now just fifteen bins away from completing the gravity bins instal and our hope is to have all the new bins in the shop by the end of the

year. We're launching this final stage of fundraising with a Donate-Your-Change week, starting Wednesday September 9. You'll find a container on the counter that we're hoping to fill by the end of that week. There are also more \$5 gravity bin chocolates on the way, and if you'd like your own piece of Alfalfa history, you'll need to get in quick to grab one of the few remaining vintage style co-op t-shirts, a bargain ▶ **6**

TRY THE LOCAL GREENS+HERBS



what's good in fruit+veg with Jamie Payne

ON THEIR WAY OUT

▶ **ONIONS** are sprouting now and will even more in spring. However, you can add the green sprouts finely chopped to stirfrys.

NEW ARRIVALS

▶ **LOCALLY-GROWN GREENS and HERBS:** Varieties such as Mizuna, Mibuna, Mitzuba, Romaine Cos Lettuce, Japanese Chives. Keep your eye out for these freshly-harvested gems.

▶ **RADISH:** A slightly pungent, peppery root veg that's good raw in salads or added to stirfrys and soups. Traditionally used for coughs, liver problems, constipation, arthritis, gallstones, kidney stones and intestinal parasites.

▶ **LOCALLY-GROWN AVOCADOES:**

Unusual shape and delicious. Uncertified.

▶ **SWEET GREY PUMPKINS:** Try in curries. Other pumpkins are also plentiful.

WHAT'S GOOD NOW

▶ **FRESH TURMERIC** has an earthy and peppery flavour with a hint of bitterness. Pickle in salt and lemon juice to eat with curries or add fresh to soups, salads and stir fries. Blood tonic and anti-inflammatory.

▶ **SWEDES:** A slightly sweet and tasty root vegetable, fantastic in mash, or as a base for curries and soups.

▶ **TURNIPS:** Similar to radish only sweeter and less pungent. Very high in vitamin C. Great for pickling, salads and soups.

▶ **YAKON:** aka *Apple of the Earth*, sweet

and juicy. Eat raw, lightly steamed, add sliced to porridge or dry it out and eat as dried fruit or better yet, juice it.

▶ **TANGELO:** A larger variety of citrus, similar to the tangerine, sweet and juicy.
▶ **OTHER CITRUS:** Lemons (especially bush), limes, ruby and yellow grapefruit and mandarins.

▶ **APPLES:** Fujis, Pink Ladies, Granny Smiths, Red Delicious, Jonathans, Galas and good quality juicing apples.

▶ **CABBAGE:** Lightly stir-fried or in salads.

▶ **CHOKO:** Very creamy. Cook them in any way with savoury or sweet dishes.

▶ **JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE:** Baked, in stews and in soups.

▶ **KOHLRABI:** Fantastic peeled and eaten raw or lightly steamed.

▶ **PEARS:** Biodynamic Packham and Buerre Bosce pears from Victoria.

Jamie

NEW, BACK & OUT

GROCERIES WITH MONIKA BAUMANN

WHAT'S new

- ▶ **WHOLE SUNFLOWER SEEDS** (organic in conversion) from NSW; grow your own sunflower greens and sprouts.
- ▶ Dried organic **FENNEL** is now in stock due to popular demand
- ▶ Organic **YERBA MATÉ**, a South American tea that's now in the green tea/black teas/coffee section near the bread bin.
- ▶ Organic Australian **YELLOW SPLIT PEAS** are replacing azuki beans until next harvest.
- ▶ Organic **CANAWA** grain – another nutrient-dense grain similar to quinoa and amaranth.
- ▶ Organic **PANEER** cheese from True Organic, an organic dairy producers' co-op that also produces some of our cheeses.
- ▶ 1L sized glass food-grade **JARS** have replaced the 750mL jars; the 500mL glass jars are also back in stock. We have a limited supply of 2L glass jars for sale – let shop staff know if you're interested so they can get them for you.
- ▶ Organic **PRESERVED LEMONS** from Blue Kitchen. Of course, you can make your own (www.alfalfahouse.org/diy_world.htm#preservinglemons).

GRAVITY BIN CHOCOLATES

Alter Eco Milk Hazelnut
Alter Eco 73% Dark Cacao
with nibs

ONLY \$5 EA

ORGANIC+FAIR TRADE
NO OTHER DISCOUNTS APPLY
WHILE STOCKS LAST

100% of sales go to buy
more gravity-feed bins

WHAT'S back

▶ Organic **GENMAI** and **MUGI** miso are both back after being unavailable at our supplier for quite a while.

▶ New season organic **SUNFLOWER KERNELS**

▶ Farmer-direct uncertified organic **YELLOWBOX** and **HAWKESBURY IRONBARK HONEY** from NSW

▶ Biodynamic farmer-direct **BROWN LINSEEDS**

▶ **MOON PADS** – reusable, cloth menstrual pads are all back. We have everyday liners, panty shields, pads (regular, super, regular night time, super night time) and also new moon pouches for storing used pads in until you can get them home and wash them out.

WHAT'S out

▶ **AZUKI BEANS** will be out of stock until the new harvest.

▶ **RICE SYRUP** will be out of stock until late October; it's out at the supplier. Try maple syrup, agave, apple juice concentrate, pear juice concentrate or honey instead.

▶ **GRAWNOLA** and **CHIA CRAWKERS** will be back when the supplier returns from a training trip in a few weeks.

FOR REGULAR UPDATES VISIT
www.alfalfahouse.org/products.htm

PRICEMATCH

Product	Alfalfa House* Cert. Organic	Health Food Store Cert. Organic	Supermarket Cert. Organic	Supermarket Not Organic
Chickpeas, dried, 100g	\$1.32	\$2.02	NA	\$0.78
Apples, dried, 100g	\$3.80	\$4.20	NA	\$1.87
Cheese, hard, 100g	\$3.34	\$4.20	\$3.80	\$1.52
Potatoes, Dutch Cream, 100g	\$0.25	\$0.30	NA	\$0.30
Mandarins, 100ml	\$0.67	\$0.72	\$0.60	\$0.30

SURVEY NUMBER 12, SEPTEMBER 2009 ■ NA: not available

*PRICES ARE WITH THE BASIC 10% MEMBER DISCOUNT.

– Compiled by Jo Rose

POSITIONS VACANT:

Three spots on the MC

There are three vacancies on the co-op's 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 of the meetings, go to www.alfalfahouse.org/html/who_are_we.htm. If you'd like to chat to an MC member about it, email coordinator@alfalfahouse.org.

SPEND \$60 IN SEPTEMBER AND SAMPLE SOME SEEDS FOR PLANTING

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 September, spend \$60 and receive two packets of seeds for planting.

PRINT YOUR OWN CALENDAR. GO TO www.alfalfahouse.org/assets/downloads/ah_calendar09.pdf

Noodles



UDON NOODLES

noodles, particularly with wheat noodles. Udon are thick Japanese wheat noodles while soba noodles are thinner and made from buckwheat or a mixture of buckwheat and another type of flour. In terms of shape, noodles are always long as they are seen as a sign of longevity but can vary in terms of thickness and can also be flat, square or round.

● ALFALFA STOCKS a number of dried noodles that are raw and have been hung

out to dry in the sun or in drying cabinets, and all are egg-free.

UDON

Udon noodles are a type of wheat noodle, typical of southern Japan. They derive from a noodle-making technique used in ancient China. They are typically buff to white in colour – wholewheat udon are darker and more robust in flavour – and are made from a dough of water, wheat flour and salt. Vinegar is sometimes added to give the noodles a whiter colour. Udon noodles are always thick but can be flat, square or round in shape and are neutral in flavour with a soft, slippery and chewy texture. They may be sold fresh, dried or precooked and are a typical roadside food stall snack in Japan. Udon noodles are often served in a broth with vegetables and slivers of tofu or meat, in a soup or plain with an accompanying dipping sauce.

● ALFALFA STOCKS dried organic udon.

SOBA

All soba noodles are made from buckwheat, salt and water; some are made from a combination of buckwheat and wheat flour. And while they can be

The term 'noodles' includes both the more typical oriental and

Asian-style noodle as well as some types of occidental pastas.

Each Asian country has its own unique way of serving and seasoning noodles, meaning you can eat noodles for lunch, dinner, a snack or even breakfast. They are often referred to as the fast food of the East.

The early history of noodles is a little unclear and appears to have been lost, although it is known that noodles were commonplace in China in the first century AD. The oldest known noodles, which are dated at 4000 years and appear to have been made from millet, were discovered at Qinghai in 2005. The earliest written records of noodles stem from the Roman Empire between 509–49 BC while northern China had special noodle selling shops between 180–960 AD.

MAKING NOODLES

BY MACHINE First, flour, water and salt, are mixed to form a crumbly, homogenous dough. Next a pair of steel rollers flattens the dough into a sheet, which is then passed through a series of steel rollers with a decreasing clearance to develop its structure. After the desired thickness is reached, a pair of cutting rollers creates the noodle strands.

BY HAND The dough is formed into a mass by compressing it with a bamboo bowl or by stamping. Next, the dough is rolled out to the desired thickness using a rolling pin and cut into strips using a knife. Noodle strings can also be formed by alternately twirling and folding a length of dough by hand.

NUTRITION

All noodles are good sources of protein, are low in fat and contain high amounts of complex carbohydrates that break down slowly, providing slowly-released long-term energy. Wholewheat noodles contain more minerals, fibre and vitamins than white flour noodles. As buckwheat or soba noodles are made from buckwheat flour, they are a complete protein containing all eight essential amino acids. As well, soba noodles contain high levels of selenium, calcium, vitamin B1, B2 and A and double the amount of protein of bread and pasta. Rutin, an antioxidant found in red wine and green tea, is present in soba noodles but not other noodles and grains.

TYPES OF NOODLE

While all noodles are available either raw, dried, pre-cooked, wet or fried, the more common Asian noodles are categorised according to the main ingredient. The diverse range of starch bases results in very different textures and flavours. Rice, mung bean, wheat and buckwheat flours can all be used to make noodles and the broadest selections are typically found in Asian grocers. Egg is sometimes added to

fresh, they are more often sold dry. They have a rich nutty flavour and a firmer texture than other pastas and are considerably darker than wheat noodles, varying from a greyish mushroom brown to beige, although the shade varies depending on which type of grain is used. Yabu soba, made from the whole grain are the darkest, while the palest and most prized oozen soba are only made using the kernel. Soba (100%) noodles are darker in colour than buckwheat/wheat soba noodles. Some kinds of soba are flavoured with green tea, which gives them a unique subtle flavour and a pale green colour. There's also a pink-coloured variety flavoured with beetroot. Slender soba noodles are typically thinner than udon, may vary from 5mm to 1.5cm in width, and have a square cross-section and square edges.

They were introduced to Japan from China during the Edo period (1603–1867) and have since become an institutionalised staple. Soba noodle shops are found on almost every block in every Japanese city, though rarely elsewhere in Asia. Soba noodles are more typical of northern Japan and are most commonly served hot in soup, however, sometimes they are served cold – often over ice – with a soy-based dipping sauce in summer, accompanied by chopped tofu, vegetable or seafood. They may also be served as a dashi stock-flavoured soup or stir-fried with a variety of sauces.

● ALFALFA STOCKS organic dried 100% buckwheat noodles, which are gluten-free, as well as dried organic soba noodles made with a 50/50 mix of buckwheat and wheat flour.

BUYING AND STORING

As with pasta, store them in a cool, dry place in an airtight container. Dried noodles will keep indefinitely.

COOKING

Unlike Italian-style pasta, which are mixed, extruded and then cut into a wide variety of shapes before being hot-dried, Japanese noodles are slowly

air-dried after being kneaded, rolled and cut out. This results in different textures requiring different cooking processes.

To prepare noodles, they are typically reconstituted or boiled to soften them somewhat before further preparation. The cooking method depends on the form (instant, fried, dried, raw, cooked) but make sure you always test if they are done by eating a strand – noodles should be cooked through but not mushy.

The dried **UDON** and **SOBA** we stock should be cooked as follows.

1 In a large pot, bring plenty of unsalted water to the boil before gradually adding the noodles and stirring slowly to prevent sticking.

2 Unlike the rolling boil recommended for pasta, once the noodles have been added and the water returned to a boil, add a cup of cold water and stir until the water begins to boil again before adding another cup of water.

3 This process should be repeated twice



SOBA NOODLES

– it encourages the noodles to thoroughly give off excess starch.

4 Using a colander to drain the noodles, rinse them under cold water and drain them again. Noodles cook considerably faster than pasta, so be careful not to overcook them.

5 To reheat noodles for warm dishes, dip them into boiling water for an instant using a wire basket, then shake the basket to separate the noodles and place them into a heated bowl.

6 Soba noodles should always be vigorously rinsed under running water after they are boiled, regardless of

whether they are being used for a hot or cold dish, as this removes the excess starch so the soba don't stick together in a big messy lump.

SERVING

1 Serve plain with a dipping sauce or oil

2 As they are soft and absorb flavours well, serve them with basil, chilli, garlic, mushrooms, spring onions, tofu, Asian greens, coriander, ginger, soy sauce, rice vinegar and bean sprouts.

3 Dissolve mugi or genmai miso in hot water, sprinkle with sliced spring onions and chilli flakes to make a simple broth to add to cooked noodles.

3 Udon noodles can be tossed with stir-fried ginger, garlic and oyster and shitake mushrooms before scattering with a small amount of toasted sesame oil and fresh chives.

4 Serve cold in a salad, such as Thai glass noodle salad

5 Add cooked noodles to a stir-fry of tofu, vegetables, meat or seafood using a variety of different sauces.
6 Make a paste of lemongrass, ginger, chilli, garlic, makrut lime leaves and fresh coriander in a food processor. Fry the paste in a little sunflower oil and combine with cooked udon and sprinkle with chopped spring onions and basil.

■ If you have a recipe using udon or soba you'd like to share (at least vegetarian and perhaps with vegan options), please send it to info@alfalfahouse.org and we can add it in our recipe section on the website.

SOURCES

- *What food is that and how healthy is it?* Jo Rogers, 1995
 - *The Cooks Book of Ingredients.* Margaret Brooker, 2005
 - *Wholefoods: a cooks kitchen handbook* Nicola Graimes, 2004
 - *The Essential Pasta Cookbook* Wendy Stephen (ed). 2004
 - *The Cooks Companion: The Complete Book of Ingredients and Recipes for the Australian Kitchen.* 2nd edition. Stephanie Alexander, 2004.
 - www.spiralfoods.com.au
 - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noodle>
 - <http://thoughtfulfoods.org.au/ingredientoftheweek>
- WORTH A VISIT
- www.justhungry.com/basics-cold-soba-noodles-dipping-sauce

Alfalfa House has plenty of delicious (for worms, that is) organic fruit and vegetable scraps that are ideal for **composting**, so if you know of any garden that needs compost scraps or you'd like to take some for your own garden on a regular basis or once in a while, please contact Jamie on 9519 3374 or produce@alfalfahouse.org THANKS



The lemonades are back and for Nija that means . . .

It's a year later

from Nija Dalal, Co-op Coordinator

Lemonades are back in season, which means it's been just over a year since I moved to Sydney and started working at Alfalfa House. (I'd never seen lemonades before.) This past year has been one of enormous change and wild experimentation! It's been overwhelmingly wonderful. Thanks to the joint efforts of the staff, Management Committee, volunteers and members of Alfalfa House, an already strong co-op and community have only grown stronger.

Over the year, we've wished many staff members luck on their new travels, and we've welcomed even more new friendly faces at the co-op. I think we've had a wonderful group of people rocking the co-op; everyone who's come through in the last year has added their own kind of warmth, kindness and innovation.

In my report last year, I made a lot of promises about the work I was about to do. Happily, I've made good on some of them! Those of you who've been in the co-op recently might have noticed our fancy new blackboards, and we're working on yet further shop refurbishments in the months to come. You've already heard a lot about one of our major shop upgrades: the gravity bins! Coming into the shop today, it's hard to believe that less than a year ago, all our products were in opaque screw-top bins. We're in the home stretch, but I think the progress we've made so far has been outstanding, especially since all the purchases of gravity bins have been through fundraising only. Thanks to our suppliers who donated cash or in-kind product to help us raise the money and to our members who donated as well. We've also been supporting a number of small and emerging co-ops including Flame Tree who have purchased our old bins at a fraction of the price they would have had to pay for them new, and they helped us out by giving our old bins a new life.

One of our biggest projects has been the database and I'm happy to say things are getting better, though we're far from



done. The good news is we are now able to send the eNews to all household members on a membership, not just to the primary membership holder – so have your housemates send me your member number and their email address if they'd like the eNews sent to them. Our computer network has also just been through a major overhaul, allowing us to work more efficiently in the office and ensuring our data is backed up consistently, which will cover us in case one of our computers falls over.

Some of my work over the year has been intended for the long-term stability of Alfalfa House. A Co-op Coordinator's Manual has been written, outlining the details of the job, and several ongoing reminder calendars have been created, so that future Co-op Coordinators will know when to get the fridges checked and the fire inspection done. I've been working with other staff to get manuals written for their positions as well, hopefully making job handovers smoother and simpler. We've worked closely with our auditor, treasurer, bookkeeper, and the Registry of Co-ops to create realistic budgets and ensure

many checks and balances are in place. Alfalfa House is already reaping the rewards of such prudence; this time last year, Alfalfa House was facing a serious deficit. In just one year, we've turned it around, and Alfalfa House is now in an excellent position to keep up the efforts against processed, packaged and environmentally-destructive food.

The world is much the same as it was last year; droughts are decimating the world's poorest populations and food safety concerns are still raging. But Alfalfa House still stands as a defender of the right to good, healthy food for everyone; I'm proud to be a part of this extraordinary organisation. For 21 years now, Alfalfa House has worked toward redefining food politics, and thanks to the hard work of so many, you can be sure Alfalfa House will be around for a long time, supporting local farmers and producers of real food and supporting a community of people who want delicious real food that hasn't been shipped in refrigerated containers across the world. Real food. Like lemonades. I think I'll go have one now . . .

Just fifteen bins to go

FROM PAGE ONE

at just \$5 each.

The other thing you will have noticed is that we've added benches to all the gravity bin shelves to make it easier for people to sit their containers while they scoop from the bins. And you might have noticed that some products have moved. Thanks to the vollies who helped with this late night carpentry mission on Saturday August 29. We've done this to help minimise risk and try to toddler-proof the gravity bins, which together with the benches, adds an extra barrier to their prying little hands!

STOCK HAS MOVED AGAIN

We're only placing stock that needs to be cooked on the bottom shelves, so if you've been hunting for the quinoas, amaranth, canawa and Andean grain mix, you'll find them on the bottom of the muesli shelf. Similarly, the lentils are now on the bottom shelf under the nuts next to the fridge, while some of the rices have moved to the bottom of the rice shelf with the sugar sitting in the middle. Some of the nuts have also been moved to the shelf where the lentils used to be. So in a truly cooperative spirit, we're asking those of you with little ones to keep an eye on them and make sure they don't open the gravity bins while you're shopping. And don't forget, there's also a toybox on the shelf next to the door inside the office to help keep the little darlin's happy, entertained and away from the gravity bins.

Monika Baumann
Groceries Coordinator

Uncertified organic what do you think?

Alfalfa House currently sources a diverse range of freshly-harvested, locally-grown, uncertified, organic produce. Whilst over half of our fresh produce is certified organic, I'm keen to support more local growers, which will allow us to provide a greater range that's fresher and that we're satisfied is grown organically. Each uncertified item we sell is, of course, clearly marked on the label.

So, what do you think? Would you like me to source more locally-grown uncertified organic fruit and veg? Email me with your thoughts. To make it quick, you can simply type "uncertified" in the SUBJECT field of the email and the number

of your choice next to it. And if you like, add any comments in the body of the email.

- 1 Love the idea
- 2 Don't really care
- 3 Don't really care as long as it's labelled properly
- 4 Would be fine with it if Alfalfa staff visit the farms and are satisfied that everything is legitimate
- 5 Not comfortable with the idea

SEND TO produce@alfalfahouse.org

Thanks

— Jamie Payne, Fruit+Veg Coordinator

6

cut&paste

Sustainable Craft Fest and Makers Market

Friday-Sunday September 11-13

at The Red Rattler, 6 Faversham Street Marrickville

Cut+Paste takes traditions of craft and re-use and pastes them into a two-day craftacular with cutting edge markets, workshops, performance, organic fair trade treats and Devonshire teas. The festival will showcase local artists, designers and craftspeople; the Makers Market will have for sale some of the best local, fair, sustainable and handmade goods around. Workshops include fresh flower corsage making; book binding; a vegan no-bake treat demo; children's workshops and a 'craft my bike' workshop that gives you the skills to glamourise your bike ride! The festival will close with an evening of fresh organic food, film and performance translating the tactile to the stage.

The festival will open on Friday night with a presentation by WEFT (Women for Education, Freedom and Textiles) a non-profit group supporting refugee women on the Thai-Burma border and displaced women in Burma to earn a fair living wage from their handmade and traditionally-woven textiles.

Supported by Marrickville Council, Reverse Garbage, Alfalfa House and The Red Rattler

Alfalfa enters the rag trade Bring in your blankets!

The co-op is after some pre-loved woollen blankets to keep the fridges even cooler at night. Quite a lot of cold is lost through glass and we'd like to minimise that loss. So if you have any blankets and you don't need them any more – they can be singles, doubles, queen-size and any colour, we're not fussed, so long as they are reasonably thick – please bring them in.

MORE INFO Nija (coordinator@alfalfahouse.org)

wild greens2

At the moment we're receiving a number of wild greens that are excellent for cleansing and renewing the body, just in time for spring. They'll be in each Friday after 1pm. Here's the list for September and they are by the kilo so you don't have to buy a whole bunch.

PLANTAIN RIBWORT (PSYLLIUM) is an excellent detoxifier, purifying and regulating the blood, treating asthma, rashes, eczema, diarrhoea, stinging nettle rash, eyes and burns. It's also useful in treating menopausal symptoms and improves menstrual flow for sufferers of ammenorhea. It's a good source of vitamins (A, B, C, K), calcium, iron, silica,

phosphorus, magnesium, selenium, sodium, zinc, potassium and sulphur. Use it in salads, soups, stir fries, smoothies, juice, herbal tea or simply cook it as you would silverbeet.

STINGING NETTLE is high in iron, and an excellent treatment for anaemia. It also has high levels of vitamins A, C, D, potassium, manganese, and calcium. Advance orders only.

DANDELION GREENS are good in salads or green smoothies. It's a proven liver detoxifier and also a unique diuretic because it replaces expelled potassium; normally, diuretics deplete the body of

potassium. The variety we are currently receiving is called Lion's Tooth.

CHICKWEED has an earthy flavour. Try it in salads or green smoothies. It eases arthritis and period pain and, when juiced and applied topically, soothes eczema.

MUSTARD GREENS have a hot mustard flavour and are perfect in curries or stirfrys or even in salads. And they're very high in vitamins A and K.

To place order for Stingng Nettle, email me (produce@alfalfahouse.org) with your name, member number and phone number.
- Jamie Payne

Recipe OF THE MOMENT WITH AIDAN CALABRIA

Cacao chocolates

GLUTEN-FREE.

VEGAN. SERVES 1

This is a raw dark chocolate base from which you can create your own masterpiece. Why not add some goji berries or almonds to the mix? Or you could replace the cacao butter with coconut butter for a delightful chocolate spread.



- 1 cup cacao butter, finely chopped
- 3/4 cup cacao powder
- 1/4 cup agave syrup
- 1/4 tsp salt
- boiling water
- 2 bowls of equal size
- whisk

1 In one bowl add a little boiling water and place the other bowl on top; be careful not to allow the water to overflow. In the top bowl add the cacao butter and allow to

melt (about 10 mins). You may need to add a little more water. 2 Add salt, agave and sift in cacao powder, then whisk for a few minutes. As mixture is prone to separate, check if it will separate by allowing to sit for 1 min. 3 Dust a mould with cacao powder and pour in the mixture. Pat down. If desired, decorate to heart's content. Allow to set in fridge for 30 mins.

■ All past recipes are on the website (www.alfalfahouse.org/html/recipes.htm)

Canada examines vit. D for swine flu protection

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is investigating the role of vitamin D in protecting against swine flu. Researchers are working with colleagues at McMaster and other

universities and hospitals to determine whether there's a correlation between severe disease and low vitamin D levels and/or a person's genetic makeup.

Part of the researchers' goal is to understand if vitamin D levels are in any way responsible for the finding that most people with seasonal influenza develop a mild illness but a small minority go on to develop severe symptoms.

PHAC noted that work in the 1940s, in experimental animal models, indicated that mice that received diets low in vitamin D were more susceptible to experimental swine flu infection than those that received adequate vitamin D. It also said there was epidemiological evidence suggesting a role for vitamin D in protecting against seasonal influenza.

Given that vitamin D is synthesised in our skin on exposure to sunlight, low serum levels of vitamin D in the winter months appear to correlate with the occurrence of seasonal influenza in the winter. New research suggests that vitamin D induces the production of anti-microbial substances in the body that have a neutralising effect on a variety of infectious agents including influenza virus.

Lorraine Heller Aug 10, 2009
www.nutraingredients-usa.com



CARDAMOM

There are several varieties of cardamom: the two most commonly used being green (*Elettaria cardamomum*) and black (*Amomum cardamomum*). Both take the form of a small triangular seedpod, containing small green, brown or black seeds. The cardamom tree is a tall perennial, native to India and Sri Lanka, but which is now widely distributed throughout most of Asia, parts of Australia, Africa and South America.

Cardamom is closely related to ginger and turmeric and is used as a flavouring in food and drink, as well as a traditional medicine. Ayurvedic medicine has used cardamom – or elā – since possibly as far back as 1000 BC. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) also makes use of it. The Ancient Egyptians used it in religious ceremonies and as an ingredient in perfume. The Ancient Greeks and Romans borrowed this tradition of using it in perfume – Greek poets even waxed lyrical over its sweet, exquisite aroma. Hippocrates mentions 'kardamomon' –

the word probably being derived from the Arab 'heh mama', itself likely to have derived from the Sanskrit 'elā', which means something hot and pungent.

Cardamom is the third most expensive spice after saffron and vanilla, but only a little is required to impart a strong flavour. It's best stored in the pod as once the seeds are exposed or ground they quickly lose their flavour. All types of cardamom have a unique taste, with an intensely aromatic fragrance. Black cardamom has a distinct astringency. Not only is it a common ingredient in Indian curries and sweets but, perhaps surprisingly, it's often used in Nordic baking, for example, in pulla, a Finnish sweet bread, and Julekake, a Scandinavian bread. In the Middle East, green cardamom powder is used as a spice for both sweet and savoury dishes, as well as a flavouring in coffee, where the ratio of coffee to cardamom can be as high as 60:40. India's masala chai also boasts cardamom



CARDAMOM PODS



CARAWAY SEEDS

as a main ingredient. Other traditional uses include gin- and wine-making.

Medicinally, the Ancient Greeks and Romans found cardamom to be a diuretic, and effective in the treatment of epilepsy, paralysis, spasticity and joint stiffness. Green cardamom is also used widely in South Asia as a traditional medicine to treat lung congestion, throat and gum infections, kidney stones, gallstones, and digestive disorders.

(Chewing the seeds is reputed to aid digestion.) TCM uses black cardamom to treat intestinal problems, whilst western herbal medicine employs green cardamom to treat flatulent dyspepsia and griping pains. Its bitterness stimulates the appetite and increases the flow of saliva thus aiding digestion.

RECIPE **Cardamom infusion**

Pour a cup of boiling water onto 1 tsp of freshly crushed cardamom seeds and leave to infuse for 10–15 minutes. Drink 30 minutes before each meal to ease flatulence or to increase appetite.

- ALFALFA STOCKS green cardamom pods

CARAWAY

Caraway or Persian cumin (*Carum carvi*) is a biennial plant of the Apiaceae family, native to western Asia, northern Africa and Europe. It is a member of the group of aromatic, umbelliferous plants characterised by carminative (smooth

muscle-relaxing) properties, such as anise, cumin, dill and fennel. However, it is cultivated less for the medicinal properties of its fruits, or so-called 'seeds,' than for their widespread use in cuisine and in alcoholic liqueurs.

Caraway is frequently mentioned by the Ancients. For example, Dioscorides advised the oil to be taken by pale-faced girls! A curious superstition surrounded caraway in the Middle Ages: it was deemed to confer the gift of retention, preventing the theft of any object that contained it, and holding the thief in custody in the invaded house. It was also an ingredient in love potions, as it was believed to prevent lovers from straying!

In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, caraway was popular in cooking and alcoholic liqueurs. In Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Squire Shallow invites Falstaff to 'a pippin and a dish of caraways.' This custom of serving roasted apples with a saucer of caraway is still practised at Trinity College, Cambridge, and at some of the old-fashioned London Livery Dinners.

Caraway has a pungent, anise-like flavour and aroma that's derived from the essential oils of carvone and limonene. It's used widely as a spice in cakes and breads, especially rye bread in northern Europe. Caraway-seed cake was traditionally given by farmers to their labourers at feasts at the end of the wheat-sowing. In Germany, the peasants flavour their cheese, sauerkraut, soups, casseroles, and bread with caraway and, in Scandinavia, polenta-like, black caraway bread is a rural tradition.

A tea made from the seeds is used to remedy flatulent dyspepsia and intestinal colic, especially when combined with chamomile. For loss of appetite and diarrhoea, combine it with agrimony and bayberry. It may also help relieve period pain; aid the flow of milk during breastfeeding; and, when combined with white horehound, ease bronchitis and bronchial asthma.

- ALFALFA STOCKS caraway seeds

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