



## Have You Heard?

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### NEW BAKING POTATO

If you are a lover of baked potatoes, you can look forward to a new potato this fall. It is a new, pure white baking potato, called the "Coastal Russet", recently released by researchers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This baked potato is whiter and moister than the Russet Burbank, the nation's leading baked potato. Many baking potatoes turn light beige inside when baked, but not the new Coastal Russet.

This whiter potato is result of 10 years of research. The researchers started out to develop a coarse brown-skinned potato suitable for the varied growing conditions of the eastern coastal areas from Maine to Florida. The new potato can be grown anywhere in the United States.

This new potato looks good with its shallow eyes and attractive skin pattern. And it takes 30 to 40 days less to mature than the popular Russet Burbank. So, this fall, you can begin looking for the new

Eastern-grown baking potato along local roadside markets and in supermarket produce sections. You can enjoy potatoes even if you are counting calories. A medium sized baked potato has only 90 calories. It is the rich topping you pile on potatoes that give an honest potato a bad reputation.

### FRESH PRODUCE CONSUMPTION BOOMING

The fresh produce section in a typical supermarket is now about twice as big as it was ten to twelve years ago. The fresh produce section usually takes up about 15 percent of the total store size and often up to 200 different items are stocked.

Why is this particular section of the supermarket expanding? Response to consumer demands! People are simply eating more fresh fruits and vegetables than ever before. Over the past decade, per capital consumption of fresh produce has risen 12 percent in the United States and consumption of canned foods has dropped about 15

percent. If this pattern continues in future years, Americans will eat even more fresh produce.

Some veggies are more popular than others. For example, we are eating 15 percent more broccoli, and the consumption of cauliflower has risen 130 percent during the last decade. Other big gainers have been lettuce, celery, carrots and tomatoes.

Lots of factors contribute to our eating changes. The baby-boomers generation is getting older and it is natural to eat a bigger variety of foods as you age. Society has also become more health conscious and the desire to eat light and get lots of vitamins and fiber tends to draw people to fresh fruits and vegetables.

### Now Is The Time To Enjoy Pears

Looking for new dessert ideas? Try fresh Bartlett pears. They lend themselves to easy, quick and elegant desserts and, as snacks, they also make good out-of-hand eating.

Shop carefully and know what to look for when buying fresh pears. Pears are one of the few fruits that are not tree ripened. Bartletts are picked green but the ripening process continues as the skin takes on the familiar golden glow. Give them the squeeze test for ripeness. If they are hard to the touch, store them at room temperature, preferably 3 to a paper sack. Within 1 to 3 days they will ripen and be ready for eating. They should yield to gentle thumb pres-

sure and skins will be a golden yellow color. Refrigerate to inhibit further ripening. Use them often in colorful combinations for good summer and autumn eating.

Pear Ambrosia is one of the easiest, most elegant desserts possible. Just combine fresh Bartlett pear chunks with a touch of grated orange and orange juice plus a touch of sugar. Add snowy flaked coconut and there's your ambrosia.

You can serve steak with great flair by adding golden slices of fresh pears to flank steak. Marinate them together in a herb marinade, place over glowing coals and create a steak of unforgettable taste and tenderness.

A pear salad -- California style -- not only tastes good, but is colorful as well. Fill fresh pear halves with creamy avocado balls and tart grapefruit sections. Place on a bed of iceberg lettuce and deep-green fresh spinach leaves. Serve with a lightly seasoned oil and lemon juice dressing.

Another quick way with pears is to serve them with cheese and crackers... for dessert, for snacks, or for picnics.

They're subtle enough to blend well with other foods, but distinctive enough to retain their own flavor. You'll find your own ways with pears... it's time to experiment.

### Drying Plants In The Microwave

If you have a microwave oven, you can reduce the drying time for flowers and herbs from several weeks to a few days. The microwave oven works best in combination with a drying agent such as silica gel. Select a container deep enough to let you cover the flower or plant with the drying agent.

With flowers, leave about a half inch of stem on the flower and place it face up in a half inch layer of drying agent. Cover the blossom with another layer of drying agent.

When the plant parts are covered, place the container in the microwave with a small bowl of water. Microwaves differ as far as energy and power levels are concerned, so you will have to experiment at first. In general, most flowers will take about 3 minutes, rotating after each minute.

Plant parts will not be dry and brittle as soon as they come from the microwave oven. Set aside the container of drying agent and plant material for up to 24 hours before you remove or handle the dried items. For example, roses should set as long as 24 hours, while thinner material like dogwood flowers require only about eight hours of curing.

To microwave-dry herb foliage, place washed leaves on a paper plate or several layers of paper towel.

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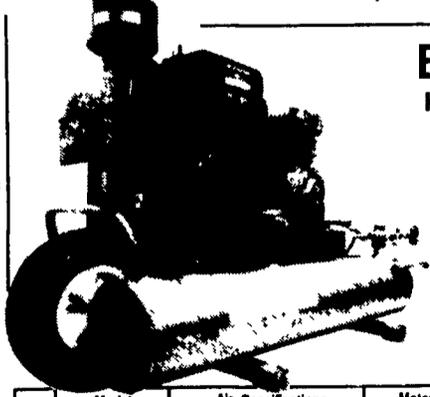
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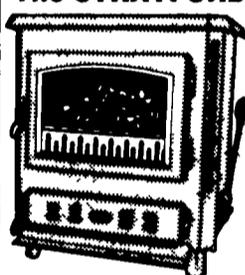
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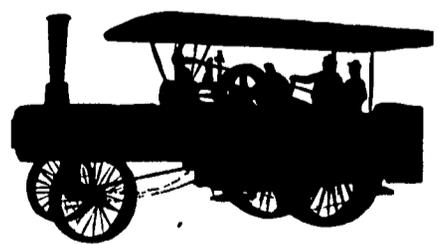
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