



These are a few of the carvings that Al Consoli will demonstrate during his workshop at the Berks County Harvest Show.

## Carve Garnishes And Centerpieces From Fruits, Vegetables

**LOU ANN GOOD**

Lancaster Farming Staff  
LEESPORT (Berks Co.) —  
With a few kitchen knives, a vegetable peeler, ice pick, and a knarler, Al Consoli carves works of art from fruits and vegetables.

"It's simple to learn. You need no special skills," Consoli says of his fruit and vegetable carving.

He's planning to teach others how to carve during the Berks County Harvest Show scheduled for Friday, August 20. The Show continues into Saturday with many other lectures, demonstrations and workshops.

Consoli said that he became interested in vegetable carving after he went on several cruises and admired the intricate food carvings aboard. After a brief introduction on the intricacies of carving, Consoli started experimenting.

He became hooked on perfecting his skill and purchased several books on the subject. Now, he deviates from the instructions to improvise his own designs such as a penguin and Daffy Duck, made from egg plants.

Trial and error taught him the tricks of the trade. He will share those tricks with the audience at the Harvest Show.

He will show how an ice pick can be used to expertly insert the "clove" eyes of a penguin and how toothpicks can be used and disguised when making a bouquet of vegetable flowers.

Most of the carvings work best when the produce is kept at room temperature.

"It it's too cold, it's too brittle and it will fall to pieces," Consoli said as he carved a candy cane from a turnip and a red beet.

Consoli said that he saves fragments from his projects and uses them in other pieces for garnishing or for coloring. For example, a sliver of a red beet brushed across a rose carved from a turnip changed its appearance into a delicate pink-tipped rose.

Oval-shaped potatoes are good not only for baking but also for many of Consoli's projects. He uses the brown-skinned-side of the potato as a base for many projects and the white side for flowers and animals. The trunk of a palm tree is carved from a carrot, its-palm leaves from a green pepper. Stuck

in a mound of a potato, the palm tree looks as if it is growing in its natural habitat of sand.

Apples form the base for the perfect long-necked swan. Consoli is adept as he takes a few slices here and there to form the wings of the swan. Dipped into lemon juice, the swan will stay fresh looking for several days.

Spring onions slivered into pom-pom shapes and dyed with vegetable dyes appear as red, yellow, green, and pink flowers in an arrangement using a squash or egg plant as the vase. Daisies are formed from turnips and carrots.

While some men send their wives roses for special occasions, Consoli gives his wife one almost every morning for breakfast. That's when he eats a grapefruit or orange, and from the peels he forms a rose to present to his wife.

"That's one of the easiest projects to do," he said. Roses made from red beets and from turnips are one of the hardest since the vegetables are quite firm and difficult to carve.

"It's a lot of work. It takes hours to make a display," said Consoli, who insists that he is not a patient person when it comes to anything else that he does.

But, Consoli will spend hours going to "50 stores" in search of the right shape eggplant or for the turnip with the right feel. And, he works many more hours carving out displays that have been used as centerpieces for parties at country clubs and weddings.

Consoli taught a class at a previous Harvest Show.

"It's hard work and I got tired of being on my feet all day. I didn't want to do it again, but they insisted that I must come back due to popular demand — whatever that means," Consoli said.

In addition to Consoli's lecture on making garnishes and centerpieces from fruits and vegetables, Sheryl Lyn Henry will describe plants with natural repellants.

Citrosa is the newest horticultural breakthrough. The plant naturally repels mosquitos without harming them. The green plant is easy to grow and reaches a height of four to five feet. One citrosa plant controls mosquitoes in approximately 100 square feet. The plant repels aphids and other biting insects.

If you have a problem with fleas, Henry said a pennyroyal plant will cause the fleas to flee. For insect control in the garden or flower bed, plant chives next to any plant you want to protect from insects.

Santolina is an aromatic plant. A few sprigs placed among clothing will repel ants, beetles, and cabbage caterpillars when planted near tomatoes and cabbage.

Some of the plants are natural remedies for aches, pains and illnesses.

"Grow the lavender herb and use it as an antiseptic for insect bites and to keep pests away," Henry said.

Feverfew can be used for stomach problems.

"There is a whole gamut of plants that effectively control insects or can be used for health purposes," Henry said. She will have several specimens for sale.

Workshops will be held on pruning and composting. Creating a Wildflower Meadow will be taught by Dr. David Sanford, professor of horticulture at Penn State University.

For those who are serious about completing a project, several workshops are offered for a fee.

For a \$30 fee and pre-registration, you can participate in the workshop on Making a Fresh and Dried Kitchen Herbal Wreath, taught by Ellen Spector Platt of Meadow Lark Flower and Herb Farm.

For \$20 and pre-registration, learn to make a flower arrangement taught by Eugene Burkhardt, florist and Philadelphia Flower show winner.

For \$13.95 and pre-registration, Sara Hess, master gardener and florist, will teach you to make a dried rye heart-shaped wreath with a ribbon.

A special Children's Corner workshop teaches children under 12 to plant a cutting, make an ornament, and other children's projects.

Retail sales include plants, perennials, potting mix, dried flowers, florist supplies, bulbs, tubers, shrubs, herbs, T-shirts and sweatshirts.

The Harvest Show includes competition for a blue ribbon in the

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