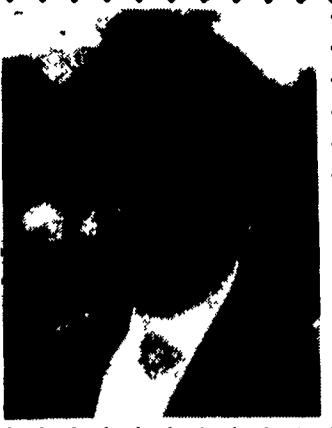


Consuming Thoughts

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Penn State Extension
Home Economist
For Berks Co.



Don't miss two of the earliest signs of spring — fresh picked dandelion greens and asparagus.

Dandelion greens should be picked soon after they first appear and always in an area that is free of contaminants (like the area where the neighborhood dogs are walked). You can use the small, crisp, pale greens alone in salads while the larger, firmer leaves are best used for cooking, or in salads with other greens. Avoid flabby, yellow or brown tinged leaves.

The season for picking and eating dandelion greens is very short if you're going to get young tender greens. Hand picking the greens is the best way to be assured of that they were harvested from a safe location. Picking your own will also help eliminate grasses and other non-edibles that are found in dandelion greens purchased at the local markets.

You probably have noticed that fresh shipped asparagus had appeared in local supermarkets since mid-February and will continue through June. The season might be longer if imported crops are used. Prices are generally

higher for shipped products that appear first in the markets.

The month of April is always the time of year when you can pick asparagus from your gardens or buy locally grown asparagus. When buying fresh asparagus, look for smooth, round spears with closed tips. For tenderness and flavor, choose spears that are at least one-half inch in diameter. Avoid those with large, woody, hard, white bases. Fresh spears snap right away, aging spears bend. And avoid sandy asparagus - the sand is very difficult to remove.

To store asparagus, trim one-fourth inch from the spears. Do not wash until you are ready to cook it. Wrap them in paper towels and place in a paper bag. Keep in your vegetable crisper and use within three days. Dip in cold water to refresh them before cooking.

Asparagus is also nutritious, low in fat and calories. Two-thirds cup of cooked asparagus pieces has plenty of vitamin A, vitamin C and potassium with only 20 calories, .2 grams of fat and no

EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.) — Summer "Discovery Days" will be offered again at the Ephrata Cloister for fourth through eighth graders who are interested in

cholesterol.

Although asparagus is often associated with fancy restaurants, you don't need to be a highly-skilled chef to prepare it in your own kitchen. As a rule of thumb, prepare one-half pound (six to eight spears) of asparagus per person.

To prepare on the stovetop, place asparagus in a boiling pot of water upright so that the stems are boiled and the tips are steamed. Boil eight to ten minutes or until tender — but still slightly crunchy. Lift the asparagus out gently with tongs and place on a serving dish.

To prepare in the microwave, snap off the bottoms of one pound of asparagus, place in a covered 2 quart glass bowl with ¼ cup water and cook six to seven minutes or until crisp. Turn the vegetables half-way through. Let stand 3 minutes, then serve.

Serve asparagus as you would other vegetables. Use it to spice up vegetable and pasta salads, grain dishes and stir-frys. It's especially beautiful on a bed of fresh salad greens with red pepper garnish and no-fat vinaigrette dressing. Or try something different like asparagus, mushrooms in a light sauce over pasta.

Students To Explore Ephrata Cloister Living

exploring the contrast between the rural lives of most 18th century Pennsylvania families and the austere lifestyles of the Ephrata Cloister. Participants will also study the style and construction of buildings and learn a variety of crafts necessary to sustain life in eighteenth-century America.

Housed in a unique collection of medieval style buildings, the Ephrata Cloister was one of America's earliest communal religious societies. Founded by a German Pietist mystic named Conrad Beissel in 1732, the Ephrata Cloister was major colonial publishing center and a shining example of the religious toleration that characterized William Penn's "holy experiment." Students will learn about the evolution of the community from its beginnings to

1941 when the property was acquired by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and converted into a historical site.

"Discovery Days" activities include a walking tour of the town of Ephrata and "hands on" experience in wool dyeing, flax spinning and weaving, soap making, and candle dipping. Emphasis will be given to contrasting the differences between home industry and factory industry.

Discover Days will be held on June 21, 22 and 23, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The registration fee per child is \$10 and is due to the Ephrata Cloister Associates by June 14. Early registration is encouraged since class size is limited. For additional information, call Willis Shirk, Program Coordinator, at (717) 733-4811.

Chicken Corn Soup

(Continued from Page B4)

Foundation, those entering the cook-off will have the chance to take home the coveted honor of making the best chicken corn soup in Lancaster County," says Horn.

To enter the Pennfield Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off, interested persons should send their neatly typed or printed recipe on an

8½ x11 sheet of paper, accompanied by a completed entry form to Pennfield Farms Poultry Division, Pennfield Farms Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off, P.O. Box 70, Fredericksburg, PA 17026. For further information, call Pennfield Farms at (717) 865-2153.

Attached entry form follows:

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