

## Farmers Market Installs Licensed Kitchen To Provide Value-Added Produce

MARIETTA, Ohio — On April 7, the River City Farmers Market began its third consecutive season, and offerings will soon expand when a new commercial kitchen opens for use.

"Our motto is 'Handmade, homemade or homegrown!' and people started bringing handmade crafts and other items to sell besides the regular farm market products," said Eric Barrett, agriculture agent for Ohio State University Extension in Wash-

ington County. Barrett's father, Jim, was the previous county agriculture agent and got the farmer's market back in business in 1999 after a long absence. A strong marketing campaign in 2000 boosted the number of vendors at the Saturday morning markets, and the type of offerings increased.

"People wanted to bring baked items and home-canned goods, too, but you can't sell those unless they are made in a fully-li-

censed kitchen," Barrett said. "Some people did get a home license for baked goods, but there is no such thing for canned goods. To sell 'home-canned' products, you have to use a commercial kitchen."

Such a kitchen is available in neighboring Athens County, but interest grew quickly in starting one in Washington County. The Washington County Fair Board wanted to improve the facilities in the Junior Fair Building anyway, and a \$25,000 grant from the Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund got the project under way, Barrett said.

Though a few details remain to be completed before full licensing from the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the city health department, an open house of the non-profit Marietta Kitchen Creations was scheduled on Thursday, April 26.

Jellies and jams, fresh bagged salad greens, salsa and canned vegetables are just some of the items that will be produced in the shared-use kitchen facility, Barrett said.

"Farmers who sell their items at the farm market can use this kitchen to produce value-added

items, increasing their profit," he said. "But even more people are interested. If a city resident wants to produce tomato juice, or salsa, or anything, we can link them up with area farmers who can supply the produce they need. The county sees this kitchen as sort of a business incubator project, helping new companies get the start they need."

The group is also working with Marietta College's Small Business Development Center to help producers write business plans, come up with logos for their farm or business, and offer other new venture-related assistance.

Anyone can become a member of the kitchen as long as they go through some basic safety and sanitation training and pay a small membership fee, Barrett said. Members will be charged a nominal fee for use of the facility: \$6 an hour for uses that don't require any heat, such as bagged salad greens or jars of cookie mixes, and for use of digital labelers for nutrition information labels; \$8 an hour for using the commercial ovens, such as what's needed for baked goods; and \$10 an hour for "full use" of

the kitchen, such as using the commercial jar fillers, steam kettles and other canning equipment. Part of the proceeds go to the Fair Board for the building's upkeep; the rest will be set aside for future equipment upgrades.

In addition to the Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund, other supporters include the Ohio Department of Agriculture, OSU Extension, the Marietta Business Development Center, Community 20/20, Marietta Community Foundation, and the Community Development Corporation.

The kitchen is located in the Junior Fair Building on the Washington County Fairgrounds, 922 Front St.

For more information about the kitchen, contact Eric Barrett at (740) 376-7431 or barrett.90@osu.edu.

## Onions For Your Health

(Continued from Page B6)

Melt butter in large skillet, saute onions over medium heat until clear. Reserve 3 tablespoons crackers for topping, place remaining crumbs in bottom of lightly greased 2-quart casserole.

Remove onions from skillet. Add soup and onions alternating layers in casserole. Mix milk and eggs, pour over onions. Top with cheese and remaining crumbs. Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes until browned and bubbly. Serves 6.

Debbie Reynolds  
Wrightsville

### HEAVENLY ONIONS

4-5 regular onions, slice, separate into rings

2-4 tablespoons butter

½ pound Swiss cheese, grated

¼ teaspoon pepper

½ cup milk

1 teaspoon soy sauce

1 can cream of chicken soup, undiluted

8 slices bread, cut into squares or croutons

Simmer onions in butter in heavy pan over low heat until tender, stir constantly. Put into 1 quart casserole, top with cheese and pepper. Heat soup, milk, soy sauce until blended. Pour soup mixture over onion mixture. Stir with knife, gently, and mix well. Overlap slices of broken bread or croutons and place on top. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

*Absolutely delicious. When I serve this recipe all my friends want a copy of the recipe. It is so good and I like to serve it with roast beef.*

Frances A. Smith  
White Hall, Md.

### CHEESE STUFFED MEATLOAF

2 pounds ground beef

2 eggs

½ cup bread crumbs

1 cup tomato juice

½-1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon oregano

pepper

2 small onions, chopped

½ pound grated mozzarella cheese

1 cup mushrooms

8 slices boiled ham

Mix the first eight ingredients. Mix together mozzarella and mushrooms. Roll eight slices boiled ham around cheese mixture and place on center of meatloaf mixture that has been placed in a 13x9-inch cake pan and patted flat. Pull meatloaf mixture around the ham mixture and bake at 325 degrees for one hour or until done.

Diana Bigelow  
Blair Co. Dairy Princess

### HAM AND SWISS CASSEROLE

8-ounces medium noodles, cooked, drained

2 cups cubed, fully cooked, ham

2 cups shredded Swiss cheese

1 can condensed cream of celery soup, undiluted

1 cup sour cream

½ cup chopped green pepper

½ cup chopped onion

In greased 13x9x2-inch baking dish, layer a third of noodles, ham, and cheese. In a small bowl, combine soup, sour cream, green pepper, and onion; spread half over first layer. Repeat layers. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes or until heated through.

Diana Bigelow  
Blair County Dairy Princess

## Learn About Good, Bad Fungi

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ever wonder why bananas turn brown after they've been sitting on the kitchen counter for a few days?

The common occurrence is caused by a pathogen known as anthracnose fungus, says Steve Nameth, an Ohio State University plant pathologist. "The pathogen is already present on the peel and becomes active under warm conditions," he said.

The fungus is not harmful to humans, but the sight of brown spots on bananas makes them unappetizing nonetheless. The anthracnose fungus will be just one of several common plant diseases highlighted during BioHio 2001. Visitors to the "Plant Diseases and You" display will have the opportunity to taste, touch and smell a variety of common fungi. Nameth said the purpose of the program is to show how common plant diseases are in our lives, but erase the "unappealing" perception people have for them. "Just because it's a fungus doesn't mean it's disgusting or icky," said Nameth.

BioHio will be held on the Columbus campus of the

College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 10-12. The three-day event will feature hands-on demonstrations, exhibits and tours covering agriculture, the environment, gardening, managing wildlife, fish farming, native plants, plant diseases and more.

Nameth said many plant diseases have a history, some of which have changed our culture or led to medical breakthroughs. For example, the potato late blight, which caused the Irish potato famine, brought Irish families to the United States, and ergot, a poisonous fungus found in rye, has been used as a drug to induce labor and aid in fighting Parkinson's disease.

Some fungi, such as mushrooms and smut, are edible. Smut is a fungus that affects grasses, wheat and corn.

For more information about BioHio 2001, call (614) 292-3897 or visit the BioHio 2001 Web site at <http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/biohio/>.

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Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll.

