

Consuming Thoughts

by

Fay Strickler

Penn State Extension
Home Economist for
Berks Co.



A lot of people assume that if a blue cheese is made in Europe, it's better than what we make here. Most experts agree that it's not better. It's just different.

Blue cheese is noted for its blue veins, semi-soft texture and piquant, tangy flavor. The strain of blue mold, rather than the veining visible are one factor that determines its distinctive flavor.

Traditionally, domestic Gorgonzola cheese has a sharper flavor than blue cheese because of its longer curing time. Lower moisture content makes it more crumbly.

When domestic blue cheese is made, the milk for production comes from area farmers. After pasteurization and homogenization, enzymes and harmless bacteria cultures are added to the milk to begin the blue-veining process.

The curds are transferred to round cheese forms or hoops and turned hourly to drain the remaining whey. After 12 hours, the cheese is removed from the hoops and rolled in salt or placed in salt brine to aid flavor development and preservation. It is then placed on storage racks for seven days. As many as 60 holes are punched in each wheel, contributing to the development of the characteristic blue mold.

The blue cheese wheel requires 60 days for cooking and curing. Gorgonzola requires an additional 30 days for aging. Some of the more popular of the blue cheeses include dana-blu, roquefort and stilton.

Try blue cheese in a moist, rich spoonbread for brunch or lunch; or in a low-calorie dressing or dip that's high in flavor.

Here is a low calorie blue cheese dip you may want to try.

Slimline Blue Cheese Dressing And Dip

- ½ cup unflavored nonfat yogurt
- ¼ cup skim milk
- ½ cup thinly sliced green onions, including green tops
- ¼ cup crumbled blue cheese (1 ounce)
- ½ small clove garlic, pressed
- ¼ teaspoon basil
- ¼ teaspoon crushed rosemary

Salt, to taste

In small bowl combine yogurt and milk. Mix in onions, blue cheese, garlic, herbs and salt. Cover and chill 30 minutes or

more to blend flavors. Serve as a dressing for salads or as a dip for vegetable chunks. Makes about 1¼ cups.

Storing cheese properly is important to maintain product quality. Firm, semi-firm and semi-soft cheese should be wrapped airtight in a plastic bag and stored in a refrigerator's cheese compartment (or warmest location) for up to several weeks. Such cheeses can be frozen, but will likely undergo a textural change. Fresh and soft-ripened cheeses should be tightly wrapped and stored in the coldest part of the refrigerator, generally for no more than two weeks.

If mold appears on firm, semi-firm or semi-soft cheese, simply cut away the offending portion (plus a little extra) and discard. Mold on fresh or soft-ripened cheese, however, signals that it should be thrown out. Firm and semi-firm cheeses are easier to grate if they're cold. All cheese tastes better if brought to room temperature before serving.

Talk And Taste Of Soy

Health professionals are increasingly promoting the benefit of soyfoods. It is no longer just a meat substitute for vegetarians to obtain enough protein. The Talk and Taste of Soy, Wednesday, Sept. 12 at Berks County Ag Center, 1-2:30 p.m., will highlight soy's positive roles in heart disease, cancer, menopause, osteoporosis, and more.

You will also see which soy-

foods provide these health benefits (it's not soy sauce), and you will learn how to purchase and prepare delicious recipes.

Mail \$1 for each reservation to Consumer Connection, Berks County Cooperative Extension, Berks County Ag Center, P.O. Box 520, Leesport, PA 19533. Include your name, address, and phone number.

Read This Before Recycling That Old Computer

Thinking about selling, donating, or disposing of an old personal computer?

If so, federal officials urge you to delete financial records, tax returns, and other personal information from your PC.

Why? Because computer files often contain Social Security numbers, birth dates, bank account numbers, and other personal information that can be used to commit "identity theft"

— to make purchases or get cash using your name.

Just choosing to "delete" files using the basic commands on your keyboard or mouse won't do the job, because the deleted information still can be easily retrieved from your computer's hard drive. Use software available from computer stores that is formatted to completely erase computer files.

Non-Native Plants Threaten Survival Of Native Insects, Birds

NEWARK, Del. — Ever wonder about an insect's preferred cuisine? Not likely, unless, of course, the critter in question is an uninvited guest chewing on your prize rose. Yet Dr. Doug Tallamy, University of Delaware professor of entomology and applied ecology, is concerned.

In a recent study, he found that insects largely ignore the leaves of non-native plants, opting instead to eat the leaves of native species. But with non-native plants choking out native growth, the insects' food supply is disappearing rapidly. At issue is the availability of insect food, a fact on which the entire food chain rests.

"Why should the disappearance of insects concern people who spend millions every year getting rid of them in the garden?" Tallamy poses. "Plants are at the base of the food chain, and insects feed on plants. If insects disappear, so do the creatures that depend on them."

"More than 90 percent of insects are restricted in their diets, because they do not have the enzymes required to digest the leaves of non-native plants, sometimes referred to as exotics," he explains. "Fewer plant food

sources, fewer insects, wildlife vanishes."

Over several months this year Tallamy and Rebekah Baity, an undergraduate researcher in the UD College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, began to measure the amount of leaf area eaten by insects on more than two dozen plants and trees. His research site was 10 acres of long uncultivated farmland in Chester County, where non-natives — specifically, oriental bittersweet, autumn olive, Japanese honeysuckle and multiflora rose — have crept into unmowed fields once inhabited by native plants.

Evaluating the food preferences of native insects, Tallamy found that the insects consumed 239 square centimeters of the leaves on black oak, a Native American tree, as compared with 12 square centimeters of Norway maple, a highly invasive species rapidly spreading throughout eastern North America.

The UD entomologist says that although a number of studies have been conducted on ecological problems caused by non-native plants, the focus has been the economics of unchecked invasion and the biological threat of displacing native plants. Tallamy believes his is the first study to quantify the effects of non-native plants on the food supply of insects, relate it to the food supply of birds and the ultimate consequence to ecological balance.

"Fast-growing non-native vines such as bittersweet, Japanese honeysuckle and climbing bushes such as multiflora rose can actually strangle a healthy tree — even a native mulberry like this one," Tallamy says, pointing to a huge tree trapped under a jumble of honeysuckle vines.

"All plants vie for sunshine for photosynthesis, yet vines have an advantage," he says. "Before long, the tree weakens, first losing its ability to bear leaves, seeds and fruit, then declining to the point that a wind or ice storm finishes it off. The result is a loss of plant food for insects and protein and shelter for birds."

Tallamy points to the multiflora rose as an example of a shrub introduced into this country as an ornamental plant. This rose

offers excellent nesting sites for birds and berries for birds to forage in fall, so marketers purposefully appeal to people who encourage wildlife in their yards, gardens and farms. But now this aggressively-growing bush has overtaken creek banks and roadsides all over the U.S., effectively choking out native plant species.

"Yes, it does provide nesting and berries for winter-feeding birds," notes a frustrated Tallamy, "but what is overlooked is that native birds also nest in native plants. More important, when raising their young in the spring, birds depend upon a supply of insects and larvae to feed hatchlings. If the insects are eliminated, so are future generations of birds."

According to Tallamy, when people see green open spaces they think nature has taken over. What they don't recognize is that the fields of green in many parts of southeastern Pennsylvania and Delmarva are overrun with 90 percent non-native growth.

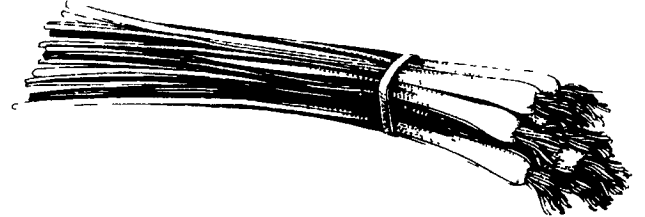
"A green field in which the native plants have been choked out by invasive non-native ones is more productive than a parking lot when it comes to providing food for insects, birds and other animals," the scientist says.

"The non-native butterfly bush is another case in point. People plant butterfly bushes in the mistaken idea that they are helping nature," he says. "Okay, the bush attracts butterflies for its flower nectar, but they will not lay their eggs on these leaves, because the foliage offers no nutrition to the hatching larva."

"Planting a native species, such as viburnum, milkweed, Joe Pye weed or purple cone flower for every butterfly bush — now that would really help nature."

Tallamy is optimistic that the data he and Baity have collected will attract the attention of birders, who may be able to influence the garden marketplace.

"I hope the scientific evidence gathered in this study will help spur people into action," says Tallamy. "Just imagine the future impact on the bird populations and our natural heritage if homeowners replaced the non-native ornamental plants on their property with plant species historically native to the area."



Avanti Garelli Mopeds,
125 miles per gal.
\$699 New
(717) 445-4541

• FOUNTAINS • FOUNTAINS • FOUNTAINS • FOUNTAINS • FOUNTAINS •

FARM POND AERATORS

Solve Your Algae Problem & Increase Oxygen

All Fountains Have A Decorative Pattern - And A Timer-Controlled Panel



Control Panel



- Low Maintenance
- No Water Hazards
- Floats on the Water

- Long Life Motor
- High Energy Efficient Motor
- GFCI Protection
- All Stainless Steel Housing



BLACK CREEK GREENHOUSE

Directions 2 Miles South of Bowmansville,
4 Miles North Of Route 23 Off Route 625
Turn East On Black Creek Road 1/2 Mile

(717) 445-5046

FREE DELIVERY
Throughout The U.S. Ask for Glenn.

• FOUNTAINS • FOUNTAINS • FOUNTAINS • FOUNTAINS • FOUNTAINS •