

## Consuming Thoughts

by

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According to the calendar, spring arrived several weeks ago. Let's just hope Mother Nature has looked at the calendar, too, and isn't going to keep switching the seasons back and forth.

Even if the weather doesn't always cooperative, we can add a cheery note to our meals and snacks with fresh spring fruits and vegetables that are available now. One of the most flavorful spring fruits is the pineapple.

Although pineapples are available year round, fully half the crop moves to market from March through June. You've probably noticed pineapples have been in the marketplace for several weeks because Hawaii ships

more pineapples in March and April than any other month. Puerto Rico ships more in May. These areas are the main source of pineapples and Mexico is a secondary source.

Pineapples can be used first as a decoration in the home. Set it out for a day or two to give your home a warm Polynesian touch. Be sure to keep the fruit away from heat and sunlight.

A pineapple cannot sweeten or ripen after harvest because it has no starch reserve. It is the starch reserve that improves the texture and taste of bananas and pears after harvest. A pineapple will never be any sweeter than when it was picked but it may be less

acid, since some acid can be lost through respiration. Eventually, the shell color will change and the fruit will soften, but these are characteristics of deterioration, not ripening.

Like peaches and tomatoes, pineapples must be harvested before they are fully ripe. This harvesting stage is sometimes called mature-green. The closer a pineapple come to ripeness, the less market life it has when picked. On the other hand, the greener it is when picked, the less palatable it will be when the consumer buys it. A lot of compromising must be made.

So how do you choose a pineapple? The best advice is to let your eyes be your guide. Select one that is plump and fresh looking. Fresh, deep-green crown leaves are a good sign. A fruit that is old looking, dry and brown leaves should be avoided. Fragrance is a good sign, too, but usually the fruit is kept too cold to be fragrant. The eyes should be flat to almost hollow. Ease with which leaves can be pulled out is not a sign of good quality. The thump test is of no value and the shell color is not an indication of maturity. The grower can rely on

a test of the sugar content using a special instrument.

Many supermarkets have cutters available which remove the skin and the core, while other produce departments have the fruit cleaned and cut in cubes and ready for immediate consumption.

Preparing a fresh pineapple at home takes only minutes. An easy way is to place it on a cutting board and slice it crosswise into about one-inch slices. Then peel the slices; thick enough to remove the eyes, or thinner and remove the eyes with the tip of a vegetable peeler. Then cut into desired shapes.

For serving in the shell, wash the pineapple. With a large knife, start at the center of the crown and saw gently down through the spikes, cutting the fruit in half lengthwise. Cut each half into two pieces. With a paring knife, cut about one-quarter inch from the skin, loosening the wedge completely. Cut the fruit into chunks and remove. Leave the shell. The shell may then be used as an attractive container in which to serve the pineapple or as one of the many salads containing pineapple.

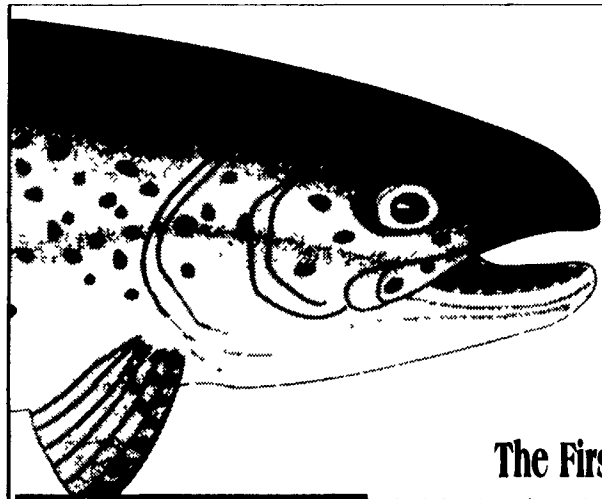
## Schuylkill Master Gardener Program Accepts Applicants

SCHUYLKILL (Schuylkill Co.) — Schuylkill County Cooperative Extension is accepting applications from men and women interested in the Penn State Master Gardener Program, a volunteer training course designed to provide experienced home gardeners with the information and skills necessary to share that experience and knowledge with others.

In exchange for instruction in a variety of gardening topics, Master Gardeners must give 50 hours of volunteer service to Cooperative Extensions' consumer horticulture programs in the county. Weekly classes for the Schuylkill Master Gardener program will be conducted Wednesday mornings from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. beginning August 27, and to the end of January 2004.

Individuals interested in applying for the program should attend an information session on Monday, June 2, from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m. in the lower level conference room of the Schuylkill County Ag Center, 1202 Ag Center Dr., Pottsville. The Ag Center is located about one mile south of Pottsville on Route 901/Gordon Nagle Train.

Reservation to attend the information session will be taken on a first-come basis, as seating is limited. Contact Schuylkill County Extension at (570) 622-4225.



### LOST STREAM MAP

The STREAM MAP OF OHIO resembles another map--known to Pennsylvania anglers as the "Lost Stream Map"

The "Stream Map of Pennsylvania" was completed in 1965 after a 30 year effort by Howard Higbee, a former Penn State Professor.

Professor Higbee succeeded in creating a map of the highest detail possible a map that shows every stream and lake. He painstakingly plotted by hand, the location of 45,000 miles of streams onto a 3 by 5 foot map

The map sold extremely well - until it was lost several years later. Incredibly, the printer entrusted with the original drawing and printing plates declared bankruptcy, then carelessly hauled Higbee's 30 years of work to the landfill

The few remaining dog-eared copies became a prized fisherman's possession. Professor Higbee was offered \$400 for one of his last maps. And state agencies were forced to keep their copies under lock and key

The experts had always told Professor Higbee that reprints were impossible, because the maps were printed in non-photographic blue

Then, in 1991, at the age of 91, Howard Higbee's dream came true. Computers made it possible to reprint the map. Holding an updated map, Howard said, "I never thought I'd live to see this day"

Then, by combining Professor Higbee's knowledge with computer technology -- the STREAM MAP OF OHIO was created

Get Ready for Fishing Season!

# Stream Maps

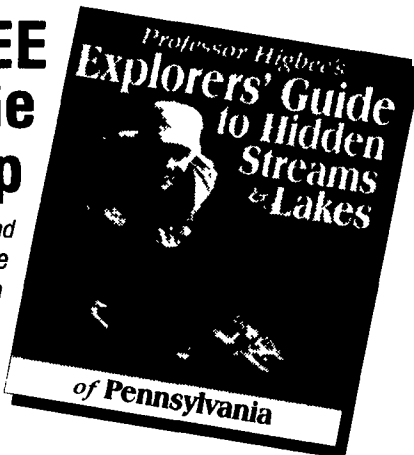
of Pennsylvania, New York  
New England, New Jersey, Ohio,  
& Maryland/Delaware

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### RAVE REVIEWS

"It is amazingly detailed and names some creeks in the Mohawk Valley that can't even be found on topographic maps"

—John Pitarres, OBSERVER-DISPATCH, Utica

"If you're looking for the most definitive maps ever created depicting every single creek, river, stream, pond and lake then 'Professor Higbee's Stream Maps' are without question the finest"

—Howard Brant, THE NEWARK STAR-LEDGER

It is in showing where to find out-of-the-way trout streams that makes the map such a treasure to the fisherman

—Joe Gordon, TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT, Johnstown

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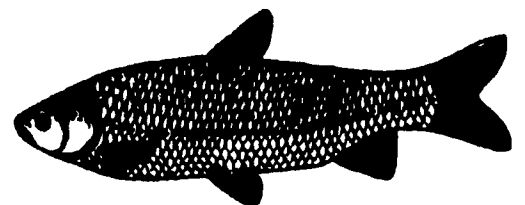
### Kids In The Kitchen

Baking together can be a wonderful family activity. It's important that kids of all ages know the basic kitchen rules. Ages three to eight will need constant supervision, eight and up may be able to work somewhat independently — within the rules that you all agree on. Make sure the work area is clean, safe, and at a reachable height. Use a solid stool or chair for little ones to stand on to reach the counter, or bring a low table into the kitchen for them to work at. Do a quick briefing on the recipe, the equipment and who'll do what and with what equipment.

#### When You Cook

Here is a quick checklist to review with kids before they begin:

- Be sure that an adult knows that you are baking and is nearby to help.
- Wash hands and put on an apron.
- Read the recipe, assemble all the ingredients and measure carefully (see Baking Basics).
- Work with an adult to cut or chop ingredients, using the knife they select and working on a clean cutting board.
- Let an adult help you set the oven, put foods in and take them out. Always use dry hot pads or mitts.
- Clean up. This includes washing the dishes, cleaning countertops, sweeping up any spills, and washing your hands (again).



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