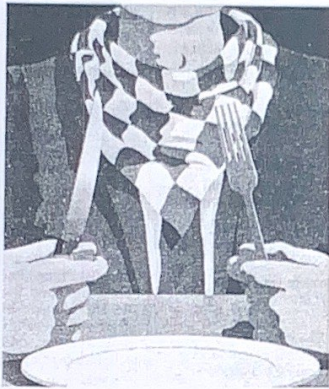


Duncan Market



The Cowichan Valley produces some of the best food in the country. If you want to sample some of it, you can get a great big taste Saturday at the Duncan Farmers' Market — a taste



Grilled Sausages with Mixed Tomato Salad

I decide to keep the recipe simple this week as the ingredients I found in the market tasted so good pretty much as they were.

For the salad

- 1 basket mixed cherry tomatoes, larger ones halved
- 4-6 early Cascadia tomatoes, cut into wedges (or 2-3 early Cascadia and 1 or 2 of the other tomatoes, depending on size, sold at the Kilrenny Farm Stand)
- 1 medium onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup of capers (optional)

For the dressing combine

- 2 tsp dried or 2 Tbsp fresh tarragon

1/4 cup olive oil, 1/4 cup vinegar, 1/4 cup honey

Venue gives you taste of best food Cowichan Valley has to offer

Sunday
Dinner



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The Cowichan valley produces some of the best food in the country. If you want to sample some of it, you can get a great big taste Saturday at the Duncan Farmers' Market — a taste that seems to grow larger and larger each year.

"When we started the market in 1993, we had only 10 to 12 vendors. This year we probably average between 50 and 70 each week," says Dodie Miller, marketing representative for the market.

Miller, who along with husband Steve owns Shady Brook Farm, is among those vendors. Over the years the couple have become quite well-known for free-range chickens and turkeys. On the day of my visit, the chickens were being snapped up very quickly while the turkeys were being ordered for Thanksgiving.

"We have some people who actually place their orders for next year's turkey when they pick up this year's," says Miller, noting that some people like her birds because of their taste and the way they're raised, while others are more impressed by their size.

"Every year some people have a standing order for the biggest turkey we can raise. When the birds reach 30 pounds, these customers are very happy."

Next to the Millers was the Kilrenny Farm stand. It too was drawing a tremendous amount of attention but in this case it was because of its wonderful array of fresh-picked tomatoes.

"We have about 10 varieties here (at the stand). I grow them from seed; some are heritage varieties while others are hybrids," says Russell-Fahlman, who grows the tomatoes and a range of other vegetables that his wife, Deborah, sells in the market.

The tomatoes they offered include early cascadia, an all-purpose tomato that's like a cross between a beefsteak and a plum tomato; tiger stripe, a small oval tomato with red and orange stripes; and persimmon, a giant yellow tomato that looks, you guessed it, like a persimmon.

However, when it came to taste, a large — and some would say unattractive-looking — tomato called red brandy wine often received top billing.

"Whenever I read about tomato taste tests, it always seems to get ranked No. 1," says Fahlman.

Nearby, a table contained some rather large zucchinis entered in a "grow the biggest" contest, and I asked the woman weighing them who the winner was.

"Jacob Grenier — he's only seven. His weighed nine pounds, 19 ounces," says France Bournazel, the organizer of the contest, who also happened to run the daycare that young Jacob attended.



Deborah Fahlman tantalizes us with fresh-picked tomatoes at the Duncan Market.

only seemed fitting that a sea of garlic would fill my sights next.

"We love the stuff," says Valerie Russell, who grows it with her husband, John.

They even sell seed garlic, which looks like any other bulb of garlic, so folks around the Island could grow their own and always have a fresh supply.

"It's easy to grow; you just break the bulb into cloves and plant each one pointed side up," says Russell, who sells a staggering 43 varieties, such as mild French garlic and strong-tasting German red garlic.

"You plant it in October, and by the next summer a bulb of garlic will have grown," she says.

Sounds easy enough, but you may want to check with the Russells to garner further tips on growing it.

On the other hand, you could always buy your garlic ready to use, as at least three other vendors at the market were selling several varieties.

Garlic is a wonderful ingredient in sausage making, and you can buy garlicky sausage from two companies at the Duncan market. Karin's Country offered a selection of a chicken and turkey sausages, and the K.C. Sausage Hut table was filled with an impressive array of sausages and related pork products — sausageoni

chorizo, turkey sausages, smoked pork chops and more.

"These sausages just came out of the smoker this morning. I used great big hams to make them, cutting off the hock and using the upper part to make a lean sausage," says owner Kerry Craddock.

After picking up a few sausages, I strolled by the Providence Farm stand and bought some fresh-picked green beans and viewed some of the best pickling cukes I've seen this year.

Some of the other vendors selling in the market sold delicious baked goods, preserves and crafts.

Legacy Wood Crafts was selling beautiful cutting boards and serving platters made from local maple.

"People like them because no two are the same. The different grains and shapes of the wood makes each item I create an original," said Dale Lowe.

The Duncan Farmers' Market, situated on Trunk Road in downtown Duncan, is open every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The last market of the year will be held Dec. 22.

This ends my summer series on local markets. Next year I plan to visit the markets I missed around Greater Victoria and travel up-Island to see what's occurring in other communities.

- 2 tsp dried or 2 Tbsp fresh tarragon
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- salt and freshly cracked black pepper

For the sausages

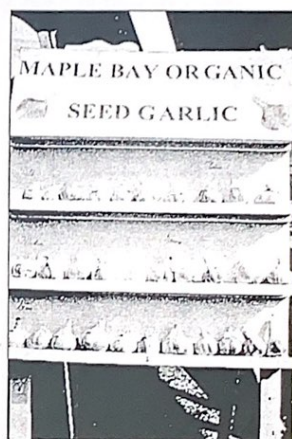
- 4-6 barbecue, chorizo, chicken or turkey sausages (or a selection)

Combine tomatoes with onions and capers. Gently toss in dressing. Allow ingredients to marinate together 20-30 minutes at room temperature.

Grill or broil sausages until cooked. (Check for a suggested cooking time and technique from the makers, as some of the sausage sold at the market were fully cooked and just need heating through). Serve the sausages alongside the salad and, if desired, the items suggested below. Serves 4.

On the Side

To complete this meal I served the sausages and tomato salad with a crusty loaf of bread, some cheese and a few boiled potatoes, all items available at the Duncan Farmers' market.



Garlic is ready to be broken into sprouting cloves and planted.