

# Hogtown HomeGrown

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## Learning to eat with my Daddy

My dad taught me how to eat. Now, I don't just mean that he fed me spoonfuls of cereal, but he forever influenced my attitudes and ideas about food. Growing up first-generation American of Syrian and Lebanese descent, Dad encountered a culture clash when faced with my mom's family and true Southern cooking. His theory was always "when in Rome..." so he learned to try everything once and more (lots more) if he liked it — abalone in California, conch in Key West, Cuban coffee in Miami, real pit barbecue in Georgia and oysters in New Orleans.

Our family excursion to Brennan's in New Orleans was a prime example of Dad's theories about food. We went to have the famous breakfast at Brennan's—he started with a Sazerac Cocktail (yes, it was around 9 in the morning and I had a Rum Milk Punch), followed by Oyster Soup (a thin broth, unlike traditional Oyster Stew) and Eggs Sardou for his main course. As we were enjoying our entrees, the couple recently seated next to us ordered orange juice, bacon, eggs and white toast. Dad was aghast—how could they travel to New Orleans, take the trouble to come to Brennan's and not "go native"? It was their turn to be aghast as we ordered dessert—dessert cooked tableside with breakfast! It was the first time I had Bananas Foster, but Dad was so impressed, for Christmas he gave Mom a chafing dish and for years afterwards she made the dessert for company.

To quote *A Chorus Line* "life with my dad wasn't always a picnic", but Daddy taught me how to write (a third grade paper about explorers) and how to eat and relish new flavors. I taught him in his later years to savor vegetarian and local foods. Two of my last conversations with Dad revolved around food—one was describing an eggplant soup he had for lunch at Hendersonville Co-op in North Carolina and the other when he called during the Eat Local Challenge in May to brag that he had "eaten local" for lunch—the first asparagus and strawberries of the season! He was larger than life—so was his appetite—and I can only imagine how much we will miss him.

## Bananas Foster

### INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup brown sugar	1 Tablespoon unsalted butter
4 ripe, firm bananas	1/4 cup rum or juice
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon (optional)	4 scoops vanilla ice cream, frozen hard

### DIRECTIONS

Melt brown sugar and butter together in large skillet over medium-high heat, stirring until bubbly and syrupy. Add bananas (and optional cinnamon) and simmer about 2 minutes per side. Add rum—if you know how to flambé, now's the time! Serve immediately—two banana halves and a drizzle of pan juices over one scoop of ice cream per person.



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**Union Street  
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## What's Fresh Right Now?

- Beans—green, lima, butter
- Berries—blueberries
- Corn—yellow
- Cucumbers—mini seedless, traditional,  
Euro-Asian
- Eggplant—white/purple Italian, white/  
purple oriental
- Figs—LSU purple, LSU gold, Celeste,  
Brown Turkey
- Grapes—muscadines, scuppernongs
- Greens—swiss chard, kale, collards,  
spinach
- Herbs—basil
- Lettuce—green leaf, spring mix, arugula
- Melons—cantaloupe, watermelon
- Okra
- Onions—sweet, yellow, red, leeks
- Pears—Florida sand
- Peas—black-eye, white-acre (shelled and in  
pods), crowder, black crowder,  
zipper cream, pink-eye
- Pecans—shelled
- Peppers—green/red/purple sweet bell,  
jalapeno, tabasco, habanero, sweet  
banana, red chile
- Potatoes—sweet, red skin
- Squash—summer, crookneck, zucchini,  
spaghetti, acorn, butternut,  
calabasa, kabooka, delicata,  
pumpkin
- Tomatoes—cluster, beefsteak, green,  
sun gold, cherry, grape, plum

*The selection of veggies and fruits is at its lowest at this time of year, due to the heat. If you like tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, squash and okra, this is your time to enjoy local produce. Consider freezing or canning some of the abundant bounty—that way you can enjoy the summer's goodness during the winter!*

## Local and Fresh— Figs

Granny had a fig tree in her backyard—my best friend had a fig tree in her backyard—a neighbor down the street has a fig tree in his front yard—the common thread? I had picking privileges during the growing season. My family and I not only love fresh, raw figs, but nothing is quite as satisfying as putting up preserves and jams to eat during the year or give to friends as gifts.

North Florida has several different kinds of figs that grow successfully here—LSU purple, LSU gold, Celeste and Brown Turkey figs are available at the farmers markets during July and August. Don't delay in eating or cooking these precious gems of sweetness—they bruise easily and have a short shelf-life, so keep them refrigerated until you use them. Just remove the stem and enjoy one sweet bite at a time!

## Fig Preserves

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups fresh figs, stemmed and quartered
- 1 1/2 cups raw sugar
- 1 cup water
- 2 thin slices of lemon

### DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Lower heat enough so that figs continue to simmer gently. Cook uncovered for about two hours, stirring occasionally. When the syrup has thickened and the figs are completely soft, skim the foam off the top and spoon into clean, hot canning jars. Wipe jar rims and seal with lids. Process in a boiling water bath for 12-15 minutes. Remove and cool—the lids will pop if the seal is airtight. Store sealed jars at room temperature. Refrigerate and eat any unsealed preserves within two weeks. Very tasty on Whole Wheat Biscuits!

## Savory Breakfast Casserole

### INGREDIENTS

1 loaf of bread, cut or torn into bite-sized chunks  
1 pound of vegetarian sausage links and/or patties  
6 eggs  
herbs, Tabasco or pepper to taste  
1/2 pound mushrooms, sliced  
1/2 pound grated cheddar  
3 cups milk  
butter or oil to prepare casserole

### DIRECTIONS

**THE NIGHT BEFORE SERVING**—Thaw and chop sausage. Combine bread, mushrooms, sausage and cheese in large prepared oven-proof casserole. Beat eggs until light, add milk and seasonings, and pour over ingredients in casserole. Cover with foil and refrigerate overnight.

**IN THE MORNING**—Preheat oven to 350 degrees and take casserole out of refrigerator while oven is heating. Place casserole on cookie sheet and bake covered for 30 minutes. Uncover and continue to bake until center is set, about 20-30 minutes more. Remove from oven, let sit for about 5 minutes before serving. Refrigerate leftovers.

### Tricks and Tips

Any bread will do for this recipe, but best results come from something with a unique texture—like challah or sunflower bread—or a unique flavor, like ancho chile bread.

## Whole Wheat Biscuits

### INGREDIENTS

3 cups whole wheat flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 cup buttermilk (maybe a little more or less)  
1 Tablespoon baking powder  
6 Tablespoons butter  
flour to dust rolling surface

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Mix dry ingredients. Cut in butter with two knives or a pastry cutter, until butter and flour combine to look like coarse crumbs with pea-sized chunks. Add buttermilk 1/4 cup at a time until a stiff dough is formed. Using a little flour to coat your rolling surface, roll or pat dough to about 1/2 inch thickness. Cut into circles and place on cookie sheet. Bake about 12-15 minutes, depending on the size of the biscuits. Remove pan from oven and cover with a couple of clean dishtowels to keep biscuits as hot as possible.

### Tricks and Tips

Biscuits baked close together will rise higher and be more tender. Want crisper biscuits? Space them about 2 inches apart while baking.

## Vegetarian Sausage Gravy

### INGREDIENTS

3 Tablespoons olive oil  
1 garlic clove, chopped  
1 Tablespoon butter  
3 cups milk  
1/2 cup onion, chopped  
8 ounces vegetarian sausage patties  
1/4 cup flour  
salt and pepper to taste

### DIRECTIONS

In a large saucepan, sauté onion and garlic in olive oil until soft. Roughly chop sausage and add to pan with butter and flour, stirring to thoroughly incorporate flour. Whisk in milk, bring to a boil for one minute and cook over low heat until thick—5-15 minutes. Season to taste and serve over split biscuits. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

### Tricks and Tips

Want more “sausage” flavor? Saute fennel seeds with the onion and garlic. Try adding a dash of Worcestershire or coarse-ground mustard after the gravy has thickened.

# Hogtown HomeGrown

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### Tricks and Tips

Any fresh fruit will work in this recipe—how about fresh peaches or strawberries with dried cranberries for a tart contrast?

Very juicy fruit will create more liquid and the amount of milk should be decreased to compensate for the extra moisture.

## Figgy Pudding

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 small loaf brioche or challah, cut into 1 inch pieces (about 8 cups)
- 4 cups fresh figs, stemmed and quartered
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 4 eggs, beaten well
- 3 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup dried figs or dates, chopped
- butter to prepare casserole
- 1-2 teaspoons of raw sugar to sprinkle on top

### DIRECTIONS

Sprinkle figs with brown sugar and allow to sit, covered, at room temperature for 1-2 hours or overnight, until figs release liquid and sugar is dissolved. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and prepare casserole and water bath.

Mix eggs with milk and vanilla, pour over bread and stir until combined. Add fresh figs with liquid and dried fruit, stirring lightly until thoroughly mixed.

Pour into prepared casserole, sprinkle with raw sugar and bake uncovered in a water bath for approximately one hour, until the center is set. Serve warm or cold. Tastes great with just a little ice cream on top. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.