



Reaping The Harvest

Hugh M. Sterling Sr. works his way along his gill net in the Pamlico River near the railroad trestle. On this foggy winter morning, Sterling pulled in shad, herring, mullet and catfish. Ster-

ling is the former chief of the Washington Fire Department, but since he turned the reins over to his son Hugh Jr. he has found time for more leisurely pursuits. (Ric Carter photo)

Fresh Herbs Add Imagination To Even The Simplest Dishes

"Garnish with parsley" is probably included in recipes more than any other phrase, and for good reason. Parsley, that curly dark-green leafed sprig, adds a colorful accent to almost any food and retains its crisp appearance on hot and cold dishes. But, there's more to parsley and other herbs than just serving them as a garnish.

Herbs add imaginative flavors and aromas and greater dimension to even the simplest of foods. They provide a creative, tasty alternative to salt for flavoring foods, too, a benefit which many people now desire.

Do you wonder how people use herbs? Take basil, for instance.

Basil is a mainstay of Italian cooking and has entered the mainstream of American kitchens, flavoring pesto sauce, vinegars, sweet-ripe tomatoes and mozzarella cheese topped with olive oil.

Cilantro, also called Chinese parsley or coriander is another herb that has become quite popular primarily because of the recent interest in Mexican and Tex-Mex cuisine.

Dill is an absolute necessity to the Scandinavian cook, used in everything from boiled potatoes to fish and lamb stew.

Spring time, when nature's green reappears along with a new season of foods and cooking styles, is an ideal time to discover the fresh herb section.

Although each herb has its own distinct character, all herbs share certain guidelines for selection and use. Choose herbs with overall green color, which indicates freshness. Yellow leaves tell you the herb is old and is losing its strength. Black leaves can be caused by bruising.

Rinse the herbs with a light spray of cold water, then shake off excess and wrap them in a cloth (terry is especially good) or paper towel and refrigerate. To keep longer than two days, place stems in a glass of water, cover leaves with a plastic bag and secure with a rubber band. Change the water every day or so.

If you have more herbs than you can use while they are fresh, consider freezing them. To freeze, rinse the herbs and pat dry. Wrap them in foil or pack in airtight bags, labeled with name and date. Use without defrosting in the same proportion as fresh herbs. Plan to use them within a year. Because basil darkens and chives get slimy when frozen, blanch them in boiling water for about 5 seconds, then plunge them into cold water, drain and pat dry. Freeze as above.

To dry, tie herb stems in small bunches and hang upside down in a dry, warm place. The temperature should not exceed 90 degrees F. The length of time required for drying will depend on the thickness of the herb leaves and stems and the temperatures. However, plan on one to two weeks.

Herbs may also be spread out on screens, raised above the floor or table at least one foot for good ventilation. Keep them in the

same temperature conditions as for hanging.

Oven drying is possible but it requires more attention. The oven should first be preheated as low as possible, then allowed to drop below 90 degrees F. This process may have to be repeated several times to dry the herbs completely.

To store dried herbs, separate the leaves from the stems if desired and place them in dry, airtight, labeled jars. Check them the first few days for moisture. If present, remove herbs from the jar and dry further. Keep the bottled herbs out of direct sunlight to prevent bleaching and away from oven or other heat sources. Most dried herbs will keep one year, but beyond a year they gradually lose their strength and should be thrown out.

To substitute fresh herbs for dried, use three times as much fresh. An easy guide is 1 tablespoon fresh equals 1 teaspoon dried.

Becoming familiar with herbs is no different than getting to know a microwave oven or food processor — the more you use them the more you'll know them. Experiment with them and you'll learn what flavors and foods each herb complements. A fun way to taste the true flavor of an herb is to make an herb butter or herb cheese. Blend about 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh herbs into 1/2 cup margarine or cream cheese and let rest one hour to develop flavor. Serve with plain toast or crackers.

HERB HELPERS

— The more delicate the flavor of the food to be seasoned, the less the amount of herb is required to result in a pleasant, overall flavor.

— When mixing herbs, avoid combining two strong ones. Try one strong with one or two more mild herbs.

— Scissors are a fast way to chop herbs. If planning to chop more than 1/4 cup, use a food processor.

— More flavor is released when a fresh herb is finely cut.

— Add delicate herbs to hot dishes just before serving. Add stronger flavored ones about 45 minutes before completing cooking, such as stews and soups.

— Add herbs to cold dishes, such as dips and dressings, several hours or a day ahead of serving so flavors can develop.

AT ISSUE

Enough Emphasis on Math and Science?

Senator Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.) is chairman of the U.S. Senate Small Business Committee and serves on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the Appropriations Committee. Elected to the Senate in 1974, he also served four years as Arkansas' governor.



YES

Are we placing enough emphasis on mathematics and science education?

Our educational system desperately needs improvement, but unhappily too many people believe that our deficiencies are exclusively in math and science. Yet for every study showing our children's weakness in these subjects, there is an equally troubling report of their inadequacy in history, global studies and writing skills.

One study showed that 75 percent of 11th-graders could not identify even the time period in which Abraham Lincoln was president. A host of other data is equally alarming. This ignorance of our history is intolerable and can only worsen if we de-emphasize the humanities.

What are the potential consequences?

Downplaying the humanities will continue to weaken our children's speaking and writing skills, which will be increasingly important in the white-collar jobs of the future. Some banks are now hiring English majors because while they can teach anyone to be a banker, they can't teach everyone to write a complete sentence.

More important, graduating without an understanding of the Constitution and our democracy weakens the basic fabric of American citizenship. I believe there is a correlation between inadequate study of the humanities and the continuing decline in voter participation. In 1986 only 19 percent of voters between 18 and 20 bothered to vote; in 1988 the rate was even lower. Nothing else matters if our young people cannot carry on the ideals of democracy.

What should be done?

All facets of American education should be improved. Quite frankly, one of our greatest problems is parental indifference. Ask any teacher or administrator.

Then, there is a dramatic need for continuing education courses for humanities teachers. We will have to pay a stipend to get teachers to go to these seminars, but it will be money well spent. Even math and science teachers need such courses.

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NO

Are we placing enough emphasis on mathematics and science education?

No. A recent National Research Council report found: "Three of every four Americans stop studying mathematics before completing career or job prerequisites. Most students leave school without sufficient preparation in mathematics to cope either with on-the-job demands for problem solving or with college requirements for mathematical literacy." Every recent comparison of secondary school students around the world ranks U.S. students at or near the bottom in mathematics and science competency. There is nothing wrong with American students; there must be something wrong with society's emphasis.

What are the potential consequences?

The consequences are here — more difficulty competing in the international marketplace, more Americans without the skills to get a good job, more businesses unable to find suitable employees and more students leaving school without confidence in their ability to use mathematics and science. There also are subtler consequences. Mathematics is connected to almost everything we do. Great musicians understand the mathematics of music; great painters understand the mathematics of perspective; leaders of a great nation understand mathematics well enough to be able to think logically about its problems. Through these connections, our students will realize the power of mathematics.

What should be done?

In March the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics will issue Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics — a guide to help local school boards across the country begin to reform curricula. The goal is to ensure that every student leaves high school with a working knowledge of algebra, geometry and their applications, as well as the ability to handle data. The standards emphasize problem solving, arithmetic, dynamic learning over passive learning, and the early use of calculators and computers in the classroom. They are first steps toward restoring American pre-eminence in mathematics and science. **ld**

Quilt Show At Library March 16, 17

A collection of quilts over 100-years-old will be shown for two days next week at the Vanceboro-Craven County Public Library.

The show will be held from 2 to 8 p.m. March 16 and from 2 to 6 p.m. March 17.

The quilts being featured have never been used and were made a century ago. They were made by Mrs. Jennie Roach Witherington, probably before her marriage in 1892. She died in 1901. Some of the patterns represented include chips-and-whetstone, French star with variation, Irish chain and grandmother's engagement ring.

Mrs. Janis Cannon will be present to answer any questions and also show family artifacts such as pictures of the quiltmaker's family and a scrapbook of poems collected by Mrs. Witherington.

Tripps Celebrating 50th Anniversary

Mr. and Mrs. Liddell "Spog" Tripp of Vanceboro will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary March 12 from 3 to 5 p.m. in the fellowship hall of Juniper Chapel Free Will Baptist Church.

The celebration is being hosted by their children and grandchildren. All friends and relatives of the couple are invited.

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