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Food Notes

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An Annual Delectation

The season for blackberries is brief but welcome. The price, \$3 to \$5 a pint at local farm stands, is high, but those who love this annual treat will find it worth paying. California bush berries, a type of blackberry, are also available for \$1.75 to \$3 a half-pint.

Blackberries are highly perishable, so pick them over, removing any damaged or mildewed ones. Refrigerate them and use them without delay. You can make a delicious sorbet if you puree the berries and strain the seeds from the puree.

If you pick wild berries, wear heavy gloves against the brambles.

Fancy Food Branches Out

Balducci's, the fancy-food store at 424 Avenue of the Americas (Ninth Street), is branching out. A new shop is to open by Thanksgiving at 1424 Old Northern Boulevard in Roslyn, L.I.

"People have been asking us to open another store for years," said Andy Balducci, the president. "Now I think the time is right. This may be a prototype for a series of satellite suburban stores."

The shop will have a small kitchen, but much of the prepared food it sells will come from the company's food-preparation commissary and warehouse in Long Island City, Queens.

Chowder in Ocean County

The Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce in New Jersey is not trying to decide which is better, white clam chowder or red; that's a matter of taste and tradition. But as part of its second annual chowder cook-off in Beach Haven on Sept. 15, visitors and judges will vote for a winner in each category.

From noon until 4 P.M., clam chowders prepared by 30 restaurants on Long Beach Island will be available for sampling. The cook-off, at the Taylor Avenue bayfront park, is part of a weekend festival that will also feature an array of food booths on Sunday the 16th.

Tickets for the cook-off are \$5 for adults and \$2 for children 12 and under. They can be purchased at the cook-off or ordered by sending checks payable to the Chamber of Commerce to Chowder Cook-Off, 265 West Ninth Street, Ship Bottom, N.J. 08008. Information: (800) 292-6372.

Chili Charts

A pair of handsome, decorative and useful kitchen posters, one showing 31 fresh chilies and the other 35 dried ones, have been designed by Mark Miller, the chef and owner of the Coyote Cafe in Santa Fe, N.M.

The 24-by-36-inch posters show full-color actual-size photographs of the chilies. They give the name of each chili, explain its uses, and rate it on a scale of 1 to 10 for hotness.

The posters are \$15 each or \$25 for both. To order, call Celestial Arts at (800) 841-2665, or (415) 524-1801 in California. Shipping is \$2.

An Extra Day for Freshness

The farmers' market at 153d Street and Jamaica Avenue in Jamaica, Queens, is now open on Wednesdays, as well as Fridays and Saturdays, from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. Farmers from Long Island, upstate New York and New Jersey will be selling produce, baked goods and specialty foods there until the end of October.

The Pick of the Fields

City mice still have a chance to see what their country cousins are up to, thanks to a group called Farm Hands City Hands, which runs special tours to farms north of the city. A September destination is Ryder Farm, an organic farm in Brewster, N.Y.

On Sept. 8, participants can pick raspberries and learn how to make them into jam at the farm. There will be desserts to sample and a jar of jam to take home.

The day will begin with a visit to the North Salem Harvest Festival. The cost, including round-trip bus transportation and dessert, is \$55. The excursion leaves at 10:30 A.M. from the **Union Square** Greenmarket and returns at 7:30 P.M.

On Sept. 16 Ryder Farm will hold a harvest day. Visitors will go into the fields to pick tomatoes, lettuce, squash and herbs, to eat on the spot or take home. Hors d'oeuvres and aperitifs at Nosmo King restaurant in TriBeCa at the end of the trip are also included.

The Sept. 16 trip costs \$65. The tour leaves at 9:30 A.M. from the Greenmarket at 77th Street and Columbus Avenue and arrives at Nosmo King at around 6 P.M.

Information and reservations: (914) 279-2995, extension 202.

For Carrying With New Cachet

SOME think it's chic to carry a tote bag covered with Gucci or Louis Vuitton emblems, but the latest in bags is direct from the supermarket.

Earlier this year, Sloan's began selling re-usable net bags for groceries to cut down on the use of disposable bags. Other chains have started selling bags as well.

For \$2.99 at King Kullen, \$2.50 at Kings and \$1.99 at Shop Rite in New York and New Jersey you get a fairly capacious canvas bag printed with the name of the supermarket. D'Agostino offers a bag in black canvas for \$4.95. Balducci's, 424 Avenue of the Americas (Ninth Street), has canvas totes for \$3.

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